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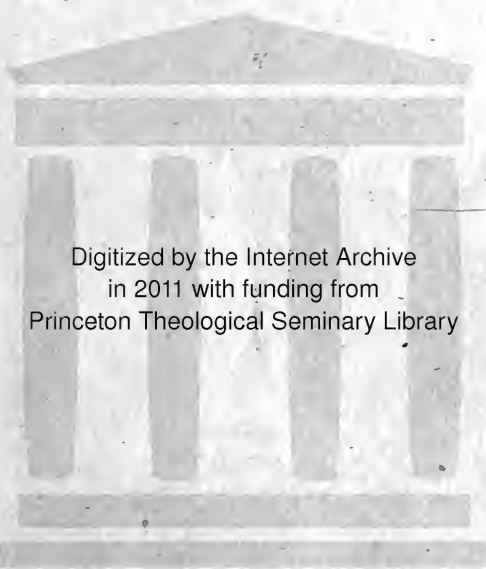
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THE  
CHILD OF THE COVENANT:

OR  
HOW CHRISTIAN PARENTS

SHOULD  
TRAIN UP THEIR HOUSEHOLDS.

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BY REV. J. B. WATERBURY, D. D.

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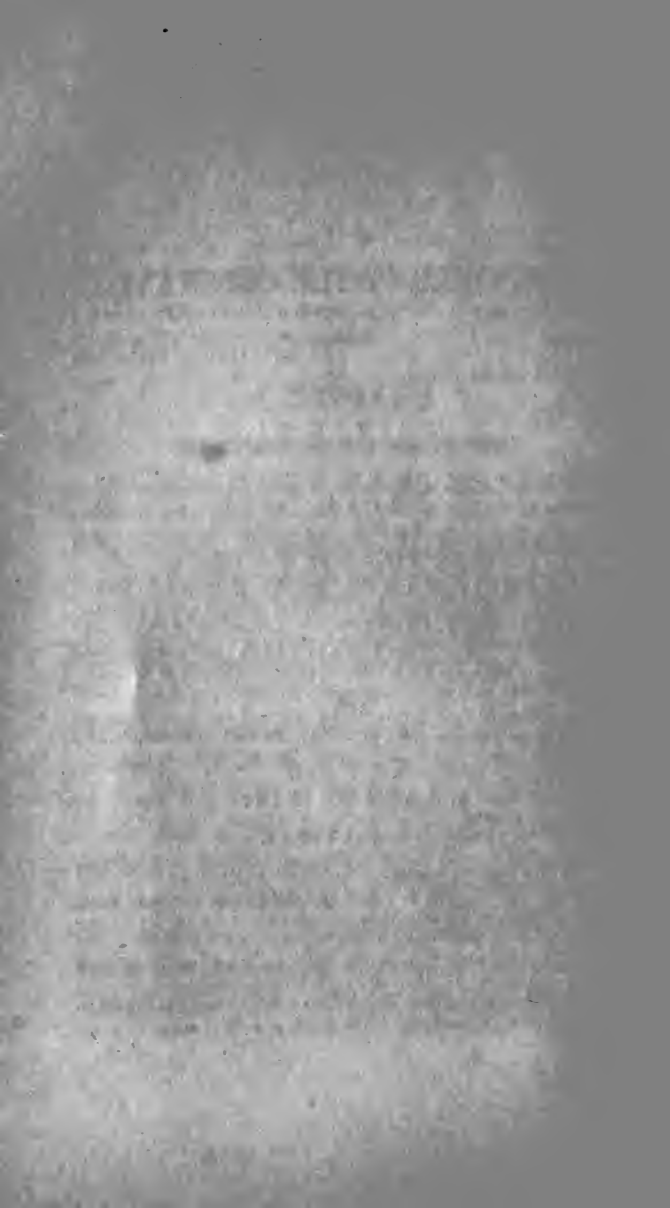
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# THE CHILD OF THE COVENANT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### CHILDREN GOD'S HERITAGE.

In what sense, Children are God's—God's claim to them recognized in the Old Testament—also in the New—the consecration enjoined, meets a natural wish of the parental pious heart—the parental relation divinely constituted.—Instinctive love common to the animal creation—its use—the higher principle in man—parental responsibility—relates to the physical wants first—soon to the moral wants—duties which grow out of the parental relation—physical education—its connection with mental development—intellectual training—developed at first under the parental eye—parents and teachers—their mutual responsibility—incentives to watchfulness.

ALL parents are in duty bound to recognize in their offspring the gift of God. They are under no less obligation to lay this gift upon his altar ; believing that in *either*, or in *both* senses, children may not improperly be called, "The heritage of the Lord." In the sense of a trust committed, of a blessing loaned, they are *theirs* ; but they are God's by right of creation, and should be so acknowledged by virtue of a formal consecration.

Under the Old Testament, express provision was made for this recognition of God's claim ; and every male child, shortly after its birth, was, with due solemnity, declared to be a part of God's spiritual heritage. Having reached a certain age, it was taken to the temple ; and with the usual sacrifices, again surrendered up to the service of God. In the estimation of the ancient church, this right or privilege of infant consecration was regarded as among their greatest blessings.

It requires no very deep study into the human heart—especially of the pious parental heart—to discover how consonant with the yearnings of nature was this provision of the Almighty. To me, it seems natural, I had almost said indispensable, that the unconscious immortal intrusted to my guardianship, should be recognized by some formal religious act as the rightful property of its Creator. Hence, under the Christian, as under the Jewish dispensation, these obligations, which the voice of nature suggests, are implied, if not explicitly enjoined. It would have been, in my opinion, a serious objection to Christianity, and one which the Jews would very readily have urged, had its great Author repudiated this relation of our offspring to the church. But such was not the case. What he said in relation to children,

if it means anything, makes for our doctrine ; and confirms, under a milder form, what was so highly esteemed and so universally practiced under the more painful one. It pleased him to say, as a rebuke to his disciples repelling certain parents who sought to lay their children in his arms that he might bless them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

#### THE PARENTAL RELATION.

What I intend however to consider, at this time, is *the parental relation*, and some of the duties which grow out of it.

As thus stated, the subject must be interesting to all ; though its presentation has reference more particularly to those who sustain the twofold relation of parents and of Christians. The parental is a relation constituted by God himself, and though designed for good, may be made the occasion of good or of evil, according as the responsibilities are faithfully met, or wantonly disregarded. At no previous time, perhaps, has the subject of parental duty—having reference especially to the religious education of children—assumed a more interesting aspect, or required a more careful con-

sideration. This arises from the fact, that in our day a less rigid system of treatment and discipline is practiced than the one which regulated the intercourse of parents and children in a former age. It is, so to speak, less severe; admitting more familiarity, and aiming at an earlier development.

There have been introduced also certain principles of *religious culture*, which profess to be an improvement on those which we have been accustomed to consider scriptural and right. The old-fashioned notions of training up Christian households have been questioned as to their propriety, if not ridiculed for their absurdity. The subject is, therefore, clothed with more than ordinary interest; and no person sustaining the parental relation—having the sacred trust of souls committed to their culture—can fail to appreciate its importance.

When a child is born, this relation commences. It is an eventful era in the history of the individual parent. The heart is moved by strange emotions; and the interest which has spread itself over a thousand objects, is, for a season at least, concentrated upon *one*. By a provision the most merciful, the God of providence has secured, in the deep instincts of our nature, the vigilance and care so necessary for the support and comfort of

the little helpless and dependent being. "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" The question implies almost an impossibility, which instinctive love has reared against the abandonment or neglect of her offspring. But other feelings soon supervene; and where instinctive affection is inadequate, the reason and moral faculties are influential.

The lower orders of the animal creation are supplied, for wise purposes, with the same instinctive love of their young as human beings. There is but *one* exception,—recorded in Scripture and confirmed by observation,—that of the ostrich, who, in the fine poetical language of Job, "leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust; and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young, as though they were not hers."

But this instinctive love is limited, in the case of inferior animals, to the mere physical wants of their young, and seems to expend itself at the earliest point of self-dependence. Scarcely has the parent bird cast her brood out of their nest ere she abandons them. She gives her newly fledged offspring one or two lessons on the wing, and then she leaves them to their destiny. She

never more recognizes them as her children, nor do they recognize *her* as their parent. The power of instinct has subserved the purposes of Providence, and henceforth is wholly inoperative.

But this is far from being the case in respect to *human* beings. At that very period, where the lower animals abandon their young, begins to operate that high *moral* care which, having instinctive love as its base, rises and reaches to the very termination of the child's earthly existence. It is this moral feature which mainly distinguishes us from the lower grade of animated existence,—a distinction which stamps the one as merely mortal, and the *other* as immortal and accountable. The *higher* relations are here recognized; those which link us to a future and endless existence. Regarding our offspring as related to both worlds, the present and the future, we are anxious to prepare them for both; to fit them for their brief sojourn on earth, but especially for their high, and, as we hope, glorious destiny in eternity.

#### PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

This feeling of parental responsibility meets us in the early stages of our children's being. At first, we are mainly anxious to administer the

nurture, and afford the care which shall sustain and strengthen the languid functions of life. It seems as if the spark which has just been lighted, would expire, if a rude breath should fall upon it. And oft-times it does. Hence the anxiety and vigilance are with reference, in the first instance, principally to its physical wants.

But soon another care succeeds. The eye has brightened into intelligence. It looks abroad, and seems to inquire into the circumstances of its being. It throws back the responsive glance of affection. Its eye flashes with anger, or moistens with the tear of disappointment. The passions begin to be developed. There is a will and a won't, that are seen in the pantomimic exhibitions of its limbs and features, ere it can embody them in words. Rapid is the progress now in emotions and principles. Its moral education has begun; and the parental relation, at this point, is felt to be one of solemnity and responsibility. There is no getting away from a position which the God of nature has assigned, nor any possibility of casting upon others obligations which lie, by the very nature of the case, upon ourselves. The intervention of nurses and teachers may be necessary, but their conduct towards our children is, in a sense, our own; for we are responsible for their

influence, inasmuch as we employ them for a specific and well understood purpose. If a vigilant supervision be not had of those, to whom we may feel ourselves compelled to commit the nurture of the body, and the mind, and the soul, of our offspring, the result may be lamented when it cannot be repaired. No being in the universe can come between us and our parental responsibilities.

These begin to operate with force, we say, at a very early period. I shall not define, as I am not able to define, the precise point of time. It may be somewhat earlier in one, and later in another. The observing parent is the best judge as to when the moral principles begin to develop, and when, accordingly, the moral discipline should be applied. Stationed by the Almighty at the fountain head of existence, he is to observe when and in what direction the stream begins to flow. He is to notice whether it is clear or turbid ; whether it is acrid or sweet. He is, however, to be more than a passive spectator of this development. Instinct unites with duty, in claiming his untiring energies in strengthening what is good, and counteracting what is evil. The period of direct parental influence is short, since the mould of character is quickly taken.



DUTIES WHICH GROW OUT OF THE PARENTAL  
RELATION.

We will now take a brief view of some of the specific duties, which grow out of the parental relation. They may be arranged under three heads, corresponding with the *physical*, *intellectual*, and *religious* necessities of our children.

*Physical Training.*

The physical education of children belongs more properly to the medical than to the theological instructor. I should, therefore, waive any remarks on the subject, did I not feel that there was a connection, even though it may be a somewhat remote one, between the healthy and well adjusted powers of the body, and the improvement of the mind and heart.

The parent who has a just regard to his responsibilities, will feel bound to use every effort in his power, to lay a foundation for the future happiness and usefulness of his children. These ends he can scarcely hope to secure, if their physical development and vigor be not carefully attended to. A sickly frame may be, sometimes

is, the sad inheritance of youth. The bud that shoots towards perfection will sometimes, from inscrutable causes, never expand into a flower, and the blossoms that bespangle the tree, are no certain index of the quantity of fruit that is to succeed. So in the higher field of youthful promise and culture, we are saddened by some secret canker, which seems silently to be gnawing at the root; indicating its ravages, in the languid eye, the livid cheek, and the emaciated form.

Inherited diseases are as difficult of explanation as is inherited depravity. In both we are confined to ultimate facts, and in neither should we question the justice of God. But let not the sad result of premature weakness be traceable to parental delinquency. The child should not have it in his power to say, 'If you had given me more scope in the athletic exercises which I needed; or had been less careful to preserve my delicacy of complexion, or my gracefulness of form, by in-door confinement, or artificial restraints; instead of this premature weakness, I might have fulfilled your hopes and realized my own.'

Does the parent wish to see his child reveling, if I may use a rather equivocal term, in all the luxury of health; happy from mere physical per-

fection ; ready to commune with all the sweet influences of nature ; with elasticity in the step, fire in the eye, and serenity on the brow ; then let that parent leave no expedient untried in order to bring about so desirable a result. But on this head I will not enlarge.

There is a connection, however, between the health of the body and the mind's culture ; at least I see not how the latter can be attained, or, if attained, can be made available, to any great extent, without the former. The intellect may indeed be cultivated at the expense of corporeal vigor ; but how much less efficient for good will the individual be, than if he possessed a sound mind in a sound body ! The pressure of ambition is sometimes fatal to the health of the youthful aspirant. At a time when his body needs room to expand, it is nailed to the study-bench, and the delicate brain is overtasked at a time when the muscles should be developed. Thus have disease and death stood ready to snatch the laurel from the young brow, and bind around it instead the fillets of the grave.

There is a connection, also, between physical health and the moral faculties, which might be traced out did circumstances permit ; but as I wish to reach, as soon as possible, my main object,

viz., the religious culture of our children, I must dismiss it with a single remark or two.

I will say this,—no young person can bring to God a too perfect offering. He cannot make this consecration as available in sickness as he can in health. He cannot serve God as efficiently. He cannot see as clearly, nor carry out as vigorously, the great moral principles which should sway him, in a debilitated as he can in a healthy frame. That perfection of mind and body, regarded as so necessary in less responsible pursuits, is surely as needful, in the prosecution of the highest which mortals can pursue. The influence of the parent then, in promoting the health of his offspring, may reach and affect the operations of the intellect and the culture of the moral faculties ; and this is my apology, if any were needed, for pointing out a duty connected with the parental relation, too seldom contemplated and too carelessly observed.

### *Intellectual Training.*

In respect to intellectual training, we are met with a difficulty, which must naturally occur to every one reflecting on the subject, namely, how few parents have the ability, even if they had the

time, to guide the opening faculties of their offspring ! This must be confided, almost of necessity, to *others*. The child, at a very early period, must be committed to the elementary teacher. He must be passed along through several grades of instructors, until his education is pronounced complete. Few parents have much to do—or *wish* to have—in forming the intellectual habits of their children. From necessity, or from choice, they prefer to have their children's minds under the training of others. But on this branch of my subject I am compelled, from moral considerations, to be brief. I am not here to devolve on every parent the intellectual training of his children. I would not, if I could, take them out of the instructor's hands. It would be preposterous to think of such a course. All I intend, by the responsibility in question, relates principally to a very early period of life.

The mind, no less than the temper and the disposition, is developed under the parental eye. The early intellectual bias is very much under the control of intelligent parental influence. The mental peculiarities of the child should be studied. No two are precisely alike ; and in a large family, the diversity, even under a uniform economy, is often very striking. Adaptation then should mark as

much the mental guidance, as it should the moral discipline. Our children are thinking beings. Thought in them is forcible, because fresh. Mind develops with startling rapidity. The foundation is soon laid ; and the superstructure cannot be massive and grand, if the basis on which we propose to raise it be essentially defective. You all wish your children to act well their part in life. You know not what stations they may be called to fill ; or what destiny, even in this world, awaits them. All this is with God. But a most important duty, next to their salvation, is to see that they are prepared to meet and discharge the responsibilities of life. If they have mind, it is our business to discern it ; and if possessed of the means, to give it free scope. In this country, education is better than wealth, and modest self-reliance a thousand-fold better patrimony than paternal acres. The very happiness of our children is connected with their personally developed energies. "I leave you," said a man of wealth to one of his heirs, "this great property, in the hope that you may have as much pleasure in spending, as I have had in accumulating it." Vain hope ! How could the prodigal ever realize it ! No ; it is in tasking the energies ; in encountering and overcoming difficulties ; in the stimulus of necessity and of hope ; in

the outlay of mind and muscle—it is in these, that the character is formed, and the zest of life enjoyed. But these the luxurious heir could never know. How much better, then, regarding even the present happiness of our children, is a well-trained mind, and a good moral character, than all the pride and luxury of wealth?

### *Religious Training.*

The training of the intellect, according to its grade and character, though important, is not a work of so great responsibility as that religious culture, necessary to fit the soul for the future as well as for the present world. It is this department of duty which I shall hope to explain and to illustrate, trusting that the God of Abraham will give us grace to “command our children, and our households after us, to keep the way of the Lord; to do justice and judgment.” Though addressing myself chiefly to those who have made a profession of religion; I would be understood as addressing all who sustain the parental relation; who have children to train, and household duties to perform. The duty of a Christian parent is the duty of all parents. By a connection with the visible church, obligation may be enhanced,

but cannot be created. If it is my duty to offer up my child to God, on the ground that the child is God's, and that I am to recognize his property in it, is it less the duty of another parent to do this? But it is replied, "I am not a professor myself; I have never given myself to God; and why should I present the inconsistency of doing that for my child which I have not done for myself?" It is true, that you could not in faith and sincerity consecrate your child, whilst you are unwilling to give yourself unto God. But the duty you owe your child, involves the duty which you owe your own soul. There is no impediment to your giving up your child, if you will first give yourself to God. It is, in my opinion, your duty to do both. But in the order of time and of consistency, the self-consecration should come first. Then will you be prepared to say, in the language of faith, "Here Lord am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

I close by repeating what I said at the beginning, that never was there a time when religious education and household consecration were more important, or their neglect more disastrous. The prosperity of Zion depends upon them. The conservative principles of the social and civil organization cannot be maintained without them.



No other so effectual barrier can we rear up against vice and error. But above all, the happiness of our children, in this life and that which is to come, is involved in them. If we neglect these duties, our repentance may come too late ; it may be protracted as long as their misery.

#### INCENTIVES TO WATCHFULNESS.

Look abroad on the city of our habitation ! See the lures which are held out, and the pit-falls which are dug along the path which our children's feet must tread ! See how many a gateway to hell is thrown open before them, whilst its portals are wreathed with flowers to conceal the dark descent and the dreadful interior. Places, which were once the resort of instruction and recreation, are now primary schools of death, in which a love for the drama is inculcated, and those tastes are fostered, which in after life will demand indulgence on a larger scale. I need only allude to other and still grosser temptations. 'The city is full of them. Unavoidably our children breathe a somewhat pestilential air, and walk amid smouldering fires. Can they walk, unhurt, without the guardian angel, *religion* ? Must not the fear of God follow them, where the parental eye cannot

go? Will you trust them to a self-sustained virtue, amid temptations so powerful? Oh no; when you have done all that a parent can do, by example and by precept, call around them a spiritual defence which, like the chariots of fire around the Prophet, shall be the unseen but effectual body-guard of their virtue.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN WHAT PRINCIPLES SHOULD CHILDREN BE EDUCATED ?

Principle and practice—theories of the moral state—infant depravity—the papistical theory, including baptismal regeneration—another theory, viz., that which makes depravity to depend on circumstances—still another theory—these theories of depravity examined and refuted.

“THE nurture and admonition of the Lord,” is that moral and religious training which the Lord approves. Admonition embraces more especially the means used in such training, viz., those instructions, exhortations and counsels which the word of God furnishes ; and which are to be constantly and faithfully applied in a religious education.

#### PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE.

In order to ascertain the way or method which God approves, in the training of our offspring, we are to consider both *principle* and *practice*.

The former respects the theory (doctrinal) which we adopt ; and the latter, the natural results of that theory in instruction and discipline. If our theory of religious belief be wrong, our practice will very naturally and necessarily be so too. It is of immense importance, therefore, that we should entertain right views of God's truth ; that we should understand also what the nature of the soil is, which we propose to cultivate, and how it may be made to produce the fruit which God demands, and which the Christian parent so earnestly desires.

#### THEORIES OF THE MORAL STATE.

The most common theory of the moral state or condition of the child is, that it has a depraved nature ; that, as a component part of the race, it is born in sin, and partakes in some manner, mysterious to us, of the impurity and vicious propensities consequent upon the fall. In common language, its nature is said to be sinful. This idea is recognized by those who practice infant baptism. The baptismal rite being symbolical, shadows forth the guilt of original sin ; the necessity of being washed in the waters of regeneration ; and intimates the hope or belief that such an inward cleansing may be experienced.

The papist actually affirms that, in this symbolical transaction, spiritual regeneration takes place. So also do some others, who, though not papists in name, are so by affinity, and also in the adoption of this and some other papistical tenets. But Protestants generally, rather hope and pray for such a spiritual change in baptism, than believe that it invariably takes place. They however by this rite do recognize the original moral corruption of their children, and their need of the renewing and cleansing influences of the Holy Spirit.

Starting from the same point, it is seen that Christians may diverge into opposite paths. Uniting in the belief of infant depravity, they may disagree in the method of removing or counteracting it; some holding that baptism is effectual to that end; and others holding that baptism is only a recognition of the need of salvation which higher influences must combine to effect.

It is easy to see that these contrary views will modify very greatly the course of instruction, according as the one or the other of these theories in regard to baptism is adopted. In the one case, the child will be considered by baptism a Christian; a member of the invisible as well as the visible church. He will be addressed as a Christian; and, so soon as he comes to a proper age, he

will be encouraged to participate in the remaining ordinances of the church. No new phases of religious experience will be looked for. If, as he grows up, he casts off religious restraints, and indulges in the vices and follies of the wicked, it will be regarded as an instance of backsliding from a state of grace, to which repentance may recover him. But still it will be insisted, that his Christian character was formed in baptism. His regeneration having then taken place, no new or radical change is thereafter to be expected.

The point of importance in this theory is, can it be true? Does baptism, by an authorized priesthood, always confer the qualification for heaven? The answer we are willing to refer to the common sense of mankind.

But where this theory exists; where it is believed and acted upon, the following effects will naturally ensue. The child being considered in a state of safety—prepared by baptism for heaven—will not be the subject of anxiety in this respect. The parent will not of course pray for its salvation. Such a prayer would, on the supposition, be superfluous. The mind is set at rest on this point. Nor will the parent be likely to treat the child, as it comes to a state of intelligent action, as he would, if he held other notions of the efficacy of baptism. Its

training will respect other attainments, than those which relate to the spiritual world. These latter he will say, are within the appropriate sphere of the priesthood. Its spiritual welfare being thus amply secured, according to the prescribed rites of the church, what has the parent meanwhile to do, but to shape its destiny for this world. His great care will therefore naturally be, its introduction into society—its success in business—and its reputation among men.

#### ANOTHER THEORY.

There is another theory of so called Christian education, which differs from this (the papistical) in some things, but agrees with it in others. It makes the child's depravity to depend on circumstances. It assumes that the soul of the child is as much propense to good as to evil; that if we cannot attribute innate holy tendencies, neither can we assert an original sinful bias; and that education may, under favorable circumstances, develop an acceptable piety. Some boldly assume this ground, and others lean very strongly towards it. Depravity is referred not to the nature of the soul; but rather to the contaminating casement in which it seems to be unfortunately lodged. The

passions springing in advance out of the animal organization, take captive the soul, in its first essays at moral action ; so that in every instance, the soul becomes depraved. The blameworthiness begins, when the soul yields to such an assault on the part of the animal propensities. Were it only to make a successful resistance, it is thought holiness, instead of sin, would be developed. But such a successful resistance, it seems, has never yet been made ; and so depravity, as a practical thing, is admitted to be universal.

It would seem, in this case, that the human nature is like a house divided against itself. The soul is well enough ; and by nature pure enough ; but there is something wrong in the body. Matter is endowed with something selfish and spiteful, and makes war upon the soul, the very moment the soul attains to accountability ; and so every child of Adam, like Adam himself, has here on earth a probation and a fall. The animal is in every instance the victor.

This idea of depravity seems to have been propounded, with a view of relieving the character of God. It is thought that, according to the usually received doctrine, He might be liable to the charge of creating a depraved soul. To this I do not agree ; believing that God is no more



liable to such an imputation on the ground of natural than of circumstantial depravity ; and that man is not called upon to help him out of any such seeming embarrassment.

This system, I have said, harmonizes in some respects with that which makes an act of the priesthood a means of regenerating the child. The point of contact in the two theories is this. They both get rid of depravity in infancy ; the one by an official act of a church officer, and the other by denying original sin. We have seen what the practical effect of the first named theory is, on the training of the child. Let us see what the effect of the other would naturally be.

You believe, for instance, that every child's soul is pure ; or at least that it is not sinful. Now the first effect of this belief, I should think, would be, to make you neglect its baptism ; which is a recognition of its native depravity, and its consequent need of the cleansing blood of Christ. Surely if the soul is not sinful, it needs no washing until it *is*. Why should the blood of Christ be accounted necessary where there is no sin. Hence, as appears to me, the practical effect will be, not as in the case before supposed, (the papistical,) to make baptism *all important*, but to make it of *no* importance—a superfluous and unmeaning rite.

The man who believes that the regeneration and salvation of his child, depends on its baptism by a priest, would be guilty of soul murder, if he should neglect to have it baptized. But in the case supposed, there is no need of regeneration by water, or by anything else ; for, according to the theory. the child's soul is now free from sin.

Another effect of such a belief (the natural purity of the child) will be to exonerate the parents from the duty of prayer in behalf of the child's salvation. The parent may consistently pray that God would prolong its life. Consistently did I say? No ; if it is not a sinner, and its living a few years longer will be sure to make it such, why should not disinterested love rather pray for its departure? The parent may pray for its victory over temptation ; for its security against that moment when the animal propensities shall make war upon its native purity. He may pray also for its earthly prosperity ; but how he can pray that God would regenerate or new-create the soul, I cannot see.

Another effect of this theory would be, as I apprehend, to set the parent to work in a course of ascetic discipline. He must attack the animal propensities, which, according to the supposition, are the main cause of its depravity. He must give

the child to understand that self-mortification is the road to holiness. The child must be told that his soul is in danger of perdition, not from its native or inherent depravity, but from the influence of the animal passions and propensities ; and that eternal life is a result of the successful resistance of the animal nature.

Now though such mortification of the flesh is all-important as a part of Christian discipline, and may be pursued on entirely different principles from those just referred to, still, where such asceticism is put in place of the Spirit's work, and of purifying grace, it is easy to see to what a fatal result it may lead. You cannot contemplate this theory without perceiving how, from beginning to end, it is at variance with the true gospel doctrine.

#### STILL ANOTHER THEORY.

There has been broached still another theory of Christian nurture, which neither denies our natural depravity, nor subscribes to baptismal regeneration, but which insists, that a Christian parent may, by his faith and by his example, form the soul of his child to a Christian pattern.

This system of Christian nurture goes on the

assumption that a seminal or propagative piety is to be expected ; God having ordained that a moral likeness shall grow between parent and child, just as he has ordained that a vegetable likeness shall grow between a plant and its offshoots. It seems to suppose that, as in physical conformation and features and expression, so also in virtue and piety, there is to be expected a correspondence between the Christian parent and his offspring. This is a nice point, which needs to be carefully examined before it is received or practically adopted. Such a theory has been broached and denominated Christian. It has been maintained by arguments drawn professedly from the Bible, as well as from reason.

Without rejecting this system in all its parts, we shall attempt to discriminate between what we consider erroneous in it, and what it appears to contain of truth. There are *some* features of this scheme which seem to find countenance in the word of God. The covenant made with Abraham, having reference to believers to the end of time, and including "the promise which is to us and to our children," seems to lend some plausibility to it. Then again, if Christian parents, by their covenant relation, and a faithful training under that covenant, may form their child to holi-

ness, it lays the ground for a most solemn appeal to their conscience, which of itself would, in the estimation of many, commend the theory to acceptance. But, as a distinguished civilian once said, "Nothing is beautiful that is not *true*." Our great aim should be, truth. All our instructions, especially those which are to mould the soul's future destiny, should be founded in God's truth. It is perilous to fall into a mistake on a subject of such weight and importance.

How much then, of truth, is there in this theory? What and how great is the error? I answer, It is true there is a connection instituted by God between the faithful training and holy example of Christian parents, and the conversion and salvation of their children. Would God bid us acknowledge them as his heritage; would he call them ceremonially clean, (see 1 Cor. vii. 14;) tell us that "the promise is to us and to our children;" and all without any meaning? Certainly he would not. Would Paul commend Timothy's piety, on the ground that the same piety dwelt in his ancestry—his mother and his grandmother—if there was no promise or pledge of spiritual good to faithful efforts in the religious education of our offspring? Figuratively speaking, you may call this a seminal piety. But it will not do

to say that the *parent* forms the child to holiness, except as the appropriate instrument or agent, under God, and whom God may appropriately employ for this end.

The child of Christian parents is, by nature, no wise different from the child of any other person. "It is born in sin, and shapen in iniquity." As Dr. Henry quaintly remarks, "Grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does : a sinner begets a sinner ; but a saint does not beget a saint." Hence the analogy fails, of seminal likeness. It is not as where the seed produces its like in the vegetable world. The pious parent represents the good tree whose fruit (morally) is good. But their children are not born any more holy or propense to holiness than the children of others. "They are by nature the children of wrath, even as others." In respect to character and responsibility, we do maintain an individualism in the children. If in features and disposition they resemble the parent, as we know they often do, so do they resemble them in their sinful nature. This they always do. It was the case with Seth, at whose birth it was said, "And Adam begat a son in his own likeness." The seminal likeness respects *nature*, not *grace*.

What advantage then, it may be asked, have

the children of pious parents over others? "Much, every way." Not, however, in being born with a better nature, but in being born under better auspices; circumstances more favorable to their salvation. The parent's relation to God, and to the Christian church, brings around the child a combination of appropriate means, which are not unfrequently blessed to its conversion and salvation. Though born with a sinful nature, there is a relation which it sustains, a covenant relation—a term which we are authorized to use, and which we love to use—which lays a ground of hope, that the faith which dwells in the parent, will also, by the grace of God, be vouchsafed to the child.

It is on this ground that the parent brings it to God's altar, and puts upon it the name of the triune Jehovah, and assumes the obligation of training it up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The unconscious immortal, in advance of its opening reason, thus becomes the object of spiritual interest, solicitude and prayer. No sooner does it give signs of intelligence and moral susceptibility, than a course of training commences, having reference to its enlightenment and salvation. Its earliest thoughts are turned heavenward.

Its first lisping lessons are from the oracles of God. This is surely something in its favor.

But we do not agree, according to the theory in question, that the child, even under such favorable influences, will always develop a pious character, with the same certainty as the seed will produce the flower which is wrapped up in it. Nor do we agree that, in its immature state, the child has no character but that which it derives from parental influence. We hold that there is a moral state of the soul irrespective of that influence, and anterior to it; a natural depravity which parental influence cannot eradicate. This is the work of God's Spirit. It may take place before parental influence can be felt, or it may *never* take place. Parental influence may be sanctified to its removal, or it may remain in despite of such influence. Facts bear us out in these assertions. There is hope; there is promise; and this is all we can say. Hope and promise are stimulus enough. They are enough for adults in respect to their salvation; they are enough in laboring for the salvation of our children.

The theory in question seems in fact, though not in words, to deny the depravity of our nature. If the child takes its moral character from that of the parent; if the seminal principle of piety must



be supposed to exist from its birth, where is the proof that it is born in sin? If the parent is to expect a development of piety, on the same principle that he expects the flower to develop from the seed; and if parental influence is but the educating or culture of such piety, even though we admit the consentaneous influence of the Spirit, as we admit the need of rain and sun-shine, will it not seem as if depravity were not born with us? What becomes of the doctrine of original sin on this theory? What becomes of the necessity of regeneration founded on it?

Such, it seems to me, are some of the errors growing out of this organic theory of moral character, and of that Christian nurture, which is modified and moulded by it.

What then is the true theory? What is the *Bible* method of Christian education? In what way is it to be prosecuted; and what results may be expected? It cannot be on the ground that an act of the priesthood will confer regeneration; nor on the ground that our children are born free from sin; nor, again, on the assumption that piety is propagated from parent to child; all these theories are in conflict with facts and with the word of God. Let us not then build upon them, nor shape the child's destiny according to them.

The subject is one of vast moment. Every parent and every child is deeply concerned to know what is the true scriptural mode of training the soul for happiness and for heaven. We cannot reach a safe and satisfactory conclusion, except by a rigid adherence to God's word. The Bible is our only guide. Let us, then, in this respect, as in every other, make it the man of our counsel; remembering that the wisest of men has propounded and answered the question, 'Wherewithal shall a young heart cleanse its way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.'

## CHAPTER III.

### CHILDREN BORN IN SIN.

The scriptural theory of depravity—a first principle, that we are born in sin—depravity to be referred to the soul, not the animal nature—sin the natural state, and holiness the gracious state—some sanctified in infancy—declaration in regard to infant salvation, and on what grounds—all children indicate depravity in some form—when are children proper subjects of prayer?—the relation of infant baptism to original sin—objection to infant baptism founded on the “*cui bono*” principle—this objection considered—repudiation of infant baptism on the ground, that it is mystical or superstitious—another objection considered, viz., that it leads to neglect other means of grace—the practical effect of our theory—leading to earnest prayer for the child’s regeneration—the idea repelled, that our views lead us to expect the child will grow up in sin—baptismal obligations an auxiliary influence in the discharge of parental duty.

IN stating our objections to the theories animadverted upon, we may have incidentally developed some of the features, at least, of what we consider the *true* theory.

We begin, however, by saying, that a first principle is, that our children, like ourselves, are born in sin; that this depravity does not reside in the animal propensities, but in the soul itself. We have no conceptions of sin which are not referable to the moral part of our nature.

Another principle is, that sin is the natural state, and holiness the gracious state. If, therefore, a child develop a holy disposition, we are to infer a change of heart in infancy, by the grace of God. Such appears to have been the case with Samuel in the Old, and with John the Baptist in the New Testament. Many others, thousands perhaps, are also born again, soon after they experience the first or natural birth. Myriads, we hope, of this description, having died in infancy, are now in heaven, and myriads more may follow in the train.

Parents discover, at a very early age, a natural repellantcy to the truth, in the hearts even of their most amiable children. There is an indifference, at least, often a positive and manifested dislike. It is in vain to say, as some have said, that this is owing to the manner in which the truth is presented to its young mind. Present it when you will, with whatever tenderness, and in the most unexceptionable manner, you will still find an indifference, if not an opposition, in the selfish heart of sin. All the fine-spun theories of religious education which have been woven, will never reconcile the natural heart to the self-denying truths of the gospel. You may give that heart something which is not the gospel, but which may

go under that name, and win its approbation. But the carnal mind exists in even the child ; and that “carnal mind is enmity against God.” Sad as this truth is, it must be admitted as a first principle in any system of Christian nurture, which professes to be founded on the Bible.

Another principle is, that where in infancy such a change of heart takes place, it will be the delightful task of Christian nurture to develop it. It will come out as naturally under pious tutelage, as the bud opens in beauty beneath the sunbeam. But where this change of heart, from a sinful to a holy state, is not wrought by God’s Spirit, no nurture, of itself, can produce it. The soil must be prepared for the seed ; and who but God can give this preparation ?

#### ARE INFANTS SAVED ?

It will not be inappropriate, just here, to meet a question which the subject may have suggested to some minds, viz., whether all who die in infancy are taken to heaven ; and, if so, on what grounds ? The papist will answer the question of infant salvation as follows :—Without baptism within the papal church, he will say, they cannot be saved. Consistency obliges him to take this

ground. They who embrace the theory of native purity,—that is, that the soul of an infant is without sin,—believe in infant salvation of course. Their idea is, that the soul goes to heaven on the ground of its own native purity. It needs no regeneration, even by baptism. But do we, who believe in the native depravity or sinfulness of man, believe also in infant salvation? I answer, for one, that *I* do. Not that God has told me, in so many words, that they are saved, but, inferentially, it seems to me that they are. I do not place their salvation, however, on the same grounds as the papist; believing that baptism, even by the pope himself, has no power either to regenerate or to sanctify the soul. Nor do I take the ground that the soul of the infant is pure, and therefore fit for heaven without regeneration. But I assume, that they who die in infancy, are included in the plan of redemption; and that God, having purposed to take them out of the world ere they reach the period of accountability, purposed also to prepare them for the change. He can wash the infant soul white in the blood of the Lamb; and that blood-bought, blood-washed soul, may see and recognize, with all the rest of the redeemed, that its salvation was of grace; and instead of complacently dwelling on its own *native*

purity, as it naturally would, if it entered heaven on that ground, it is prepared to join in the song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever !"

We have got to begin by making the tree good, if we expect to see the fruit good. This radical renovation is not, however, a matter of education. It is the act and the work of God's Holy Spirit. Our first care, then, should be to see that the ground is prepared. We are thus thrown, at once, and at first, in simple dependence on the power and grace of God. In Christian education let us begin with this concession, that the heart of the child must be prepared, as the soil is prepared, to receive the good seed which we propose to implant. This points out the duty of prayer for the conversion and salvation of our children.

#### WHEN ARE CHILDREN PROPER SUBJECTS OF PRAYER ?

A Christian parent, on our principles, should begin to pray for his child so soon as it has an existence. Ere reason dawns, or conscious purposes

can be formed ; or, peradventure, even the will is not exercised,—when there is simple existence—a soul in its earliest buddings—we are, on the old scriptural ground of native depravity, to pray that God’s Spirit would regenerate its soul. But how is this? Do we believe that regeneration can take place when the soul is passive ; when there can be no intelligent co-operation of the will? To this we reply, by asking, on the other hand, if such souls need no change of heart to fit them for the kingdom of God? To assert it, is to deny native depravity ; to deny Christ’s repeated declaration, “Ye must be born again,”—a necessity based on the natural depravity of man. If children are depraved, they are, in the earliest stages of their being, subjected to the same necessity of regeneration, as if they had lived longer and sinned more. Many, we know, have experienced this change in infancy. In answer to prayer, young Samuel was regenerated. So was John the Baptist. They were not created holy. Their nature was not, in this respect, different from others. Yet they were sanctified from the womb. In their case, the work of regenerating grace, (so far as we can understand,) must have taken place without an intelligent co-operation of the will. As they grew in stature, they grew in knowledge



and in grace. The seed sown by the divine Spirit in the young heart, long before the parent could have access to it, developed in a most striking manner in after life. And so thousands, we trust, have in like manner experienced regeneration in their infancy, many of whom have gone to people the better land, and others have remained to bless this fallen world.

Christian parents have a right to pray for the regeneration of their children, in every stage of their being ; and moreover to expect it. Let them in faith give them up to God ; bringing them to his altar, and thus formally recognizing his right in them, and his gracious promises respecting them ; and thenceforward let them look for the work of the Spirit on their hearts. Even when no evidence of such a change can, from the nature of the case, be given, let them hope for it ; and if the child, peradventure, be snatched from them by death, let them hope and believe that regeneration has prepared it for the glorious transition. All this is plain and scriptural. The Bible does not deal in a mystical philosophy. It does not wrap up the moral character of the child in the moral character of the parent, as the seed is wrapped up in the capsule ; making the development as natural and as homogeneous in the one case as in the

other. It has no such hard phrase as "the law of organic connection." It never trenches upon the individual responsibility. In all its social recognitions, it still keeps in view the individual, conscious soul, and pronounces upon the character of each. Each one is a lost sinner. No matter how young; each has a nature tainted by sin. Each must be the subject of a distinct work of grace, in order to fit it for the kingdom of heaven. In all this we simply follow the Scriptures. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." It reigned over young and old, because *all* were regarded as sinners, even though they had not transgressed, as Adam did, under the obligations of an express and particular law.

What now is the relation of infant baptism to the sin (original) in question? The papist, and some others who tread closely in his steps, will say, "Baptism regenerates; it changes the heart." I need not stop to answer or disprove this. But what is *our* view of infant baptism in relation to this doctrine—original sin? We say, that it recognizes its deep stain, and points to the only remedy, "the washing of regeneration and the

renewing of the Holy Ghost.” In this rite, the parent professes his faith in these great doctrines ; recognizes the fallen state of his child, and the necessity of redemption by the blood of Jesus. In this tacit or symbolical profession of faith, he engages to pray for the regeneration of the child ; to teach it to pray ; to instruct it in the word that sanctifies ; and thus to “ bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

#### OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

Here is something that all can understand. But what good, some may ask, accrues directly to the baptized child ? We cannot, with certainty, know what good will accrue to it. It may be, we trust it often is the case, that where such duty is performed in sincerity and in faith, the soul of the child will be visited by heavenly grace, and the seeds of a glorious harvest be then and there sown. The parent may hope and expect and pray for such an inward change ; but he is too well read in his Bible to suppose that there is any mystical virtue, in the sacrament itself, to effect this change. Some repudiate infant baptism, on the ground that it is mystical and superstitious ; that parents are apt to look upon it as a

sort of spiritual charm to work out the salvation of their children, and so be led to neglect other and more appropriate means of grace. The objection, in my apprehension, is a vain one. Every good gift of God may be abused. Every precious ordinance may be perverted by ignorance or by hypocrisy. Some look upon the sacrament of the supper as a sacrifice ; and others declare that baptism is regeneration ; and some even make a great deal of the particular *mode* in which baptism is administered. Suppose we should say to the immersionist, your system tends to pharisaism, because it makes so much of a mere form. This would be considered very uncharitable, and such a consequence of immersion-baptism would be strenuously denied. Well, then, let those who differ from us on this subject, give us the credit of an intelligent understanding of the ordinance as we practice it ; and when we say that infant baptism is blessed to the furtherance of household piety, especially where its obligations are faithfully carried out, let them, as the sons and daughters of the same charitable religion, believe us sincere.

We say, that so far from leading to a neglect of the religious training of our children, the baptismal vows bind us the more sacredly to its performance. We declare it as our opinion, more-

over, that parents who hold this ordinance dear, and conscientiously avail themselves of its privileges, are the ones who ordinarily labor and pray for the conversion and spiritual good of their households. Does not the church of God draw her strength from such households ; and, in revivals of religion, do we not find young converts assuming, in their own behalf, the vows which their parents had so solemnly taken for them ? Thus, “instead of the fathers are the children ;” and the perpetuity of the church, through the conversion of its infant members, verifies to believers, that ‘the promise is to them and to their children.’

What is the practical effect of our theory, viz., that in baptism we recognize the native depravity of our children, and our dependence on the Holy Spirit to change the heart ? We have shown the effect in *one* particular, viz., to lead the parent to earnest prayer for regenerating grace. But *another* practical effect is, to watch the opening moral faculties ; to observe with Christian solicitude the development of character ; hoping, meanwhile, that his prayers may have been answered, and that, from the very outset of existence, the evidences of piety may be discovered.

I mention this, because, as I believe, it is no uncommon expectation, on the part of those who value the Abrahamic covenant, and believe in the efficacy of prayer.

Were we to adopt the theory of infant character, which makes depravity the result of temptation,—assuming that the pollution lies in the body rather than in the soul,—how unreasonable it would be, considering the power of the animal propensities, to expect any early development of piety. But our trust in the promise and grace of God, that the soul, dark and depraved as it is by nature, will, in answer to prayer, be the early subject of renewing grace ; this trust leads us to look for an early development of piety. Should this happily prove to be the case, how easy and delightful will be the task of bringing the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ! But even should no such marked tendency to divine things show itself, in the opening character ; or should even an opposite tendency be seen, still will the Christian parent hope in his covenant God, believing that, sooner or later, under faithful training and admonition, the child of the covenant will become a child of God.

It has been said, or insinuated, that our views

lead us to expect that the child will grow up in sin ; that conversion cannot, or, at least, *will* not take place until adult years, and so Christians are betrayed into a practical neglect of spiritual nurture. After what has been said, I see not how any such notions can reasonably or truthfully be charged upon us. I would not affirm that in no case, within our communion, such a perversion of the truth may not have taken place ; but in the name of all our intelligent and devout members, I am prepared to deny its application to them. They do not expect their children to grow up in sin. They hope and pray for their conversion, in every period of their existence. They go even farther back in their expectations than the persons who bring this charge. Such persons, peradventure, do not hold to the necessity of a change of heart in infancy,—a state in which, they say, no sin exists in the soul. Naturally enough, then, would they not expect or pray for its regeneration. But believing, as we do, in its native sinfulness, we are led to pray for its regeneration so soon as it has being. Thenceforward, depending on the grace of God, we are in constant expectation of a work of grace on the youthful heart. Every day witnesses to earnest prayer

for this grace ; and, so combining instruction with prayer, “ we are as they that hope for the morning.” What a calumny it is, to say that we expect our children to grow up in sin ! It is *not* the case ; and, I trust in God, it never *will* be. If our children grow up in sin, it is in despite of our tears, our hopes, and our prayers. If ever the day *should* come when this allegation shall be true, it will be when the Abrahamic covenant is rejected ; when infant baptism shall have fallen into neglect, and the vows and obligations which it implies are no longer publicly recognized.

We need every auxiliary influence which can be lawfully brought to bear, to bind us to a faithful performance of parental duty. The God of Abraham has given us this sacred ligature. It is as one of the cords of love wherewith we are drawn to duty. Religion extends her dominion into the sanctuary of parental love, and claims both us and our children to her service. In all the varying phases of the church she has made provision for our offspring. In her ancient constitution they were especially provided for. The seal of the righteousness of faith must be affixed to them. They had to wear in their flesh the mark of God’s heritage. The parent was bound to train them up



for God. How beautiful also the sight, when at an age susceptible of religious culture, they were brought to the temple, with appropriate sacrifices ; there to receive impressions which the solemnities of that worship were calculated to inspire. By covenant and by promise, children belonged to the kingdom of heaven. Hence said Jesus, ‘suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not.’

And does the same church of God, under its extended and renovated constitution, with better promises, with enlarged privileges, allow no place for the lambs of the flock, within her visible fold ? Assuredly this cannot be.

The church has always acted on the assumption, that her privileges in this respect have not been curtailed. How interesting also, under the new covenant, is the moral spectacle, when those, to whom God has given children, are seen at his altar, with their precious charge ; recognizing God’s right in them, recognizing their sinful state, their need of the regenerating Spirit, and offering them up with faith in the covenant which is well-ordered and sure !

Here is a bond that binds with a twofold strength. Parental love and religious faith twine around the unconscious immortal committed to our

trust. Oh, never may the church see the day when indifference in regard to infant consecration shall be prevalent ! It would mark a sad era in her history ; nor would it require any prophetic inspiration to discern gathering around her destiny, the shadows of a fearful apostacy.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DUTY OF PARENTS TO THEIR UNCONVERTED CHILDREN.

Children generally indicate a sinful rather than a gracious state—manifest at a very early age—parental influence, when should it begin—first, restraint of the passions—the responsible season for moral culture—children taught their relation to God—the idea of God, and its influence—conscience, when operative—moral ideas, how inculcated—the object which a Christian parent should keep in view—natural aptitude in the young mind to receive religious impressions—the being of God a great lever in the hand of the parent—how far natural religion aids us—the Bible, the great thesaurus of instruction—proper views of the divine character to be inculcated.

HAVING laid the foundation of the true theory of Christian nurture, in the necessity of a change of heart, by which, speaking in a figure, the soil is prepared for the seed ; and, starting from this point, we may inquire, What is best adapted to further our proposed design ?

If God shall see fit to change the heart in infancy,—which, as we have seen, Christian parents may not unreasonably expect,—the work of Christian training will be comparatively easy. But as this blessed result is but too seldom real-

ized, we are to take the case in its more common aspect, as when our children are cast upon our tutelage, with the manifest indications of a selfish and sin-loving heart. Meeting them at the threshold of existence, as their moral guardians, we are to exert upon them an influence which may tend to mould their characters into conformity to the will of God. This is Christian nurture ; whether it be applied to the more full development of Christian character, the seminal principle of which may have been implanted in infancy, or whether such training aim, by appropriate means, under God, at producing the first elements of piety.

To some, the latter process may seem hardly to justify the use of the term, "Christian nurture ;" which, from the nature of the case, seems to suppose the cultivation of a seed already implanted. But we take the expression in a more liberal and extended sense, just as we instruct a promiscuous assembly in the things of the kingdom of God. The same means will, at the same time, be blessed to the edification of one class, and to the conviction and conversion of another.

It is hardly to be supposed that, when the Apostle enjoined it upon the Ephesians to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition

of the Lord," he had in view only such children as were pious. Indeed, there is reason to believe that he had reference to the formation of piety, by God's appointed means, in the hearts of children as yet not under its governing influence.

Most children, even of pious parents, do not, we lament to say, give early evidence of a change of heart. But may not the seeds of piety be in them, it has been asked, while yet the parent is ignorant of it? Is it right to infer, because there are no manifest disclosures of pious tendencies, that therefore piety does not exist? It is superfluous, I should think, to put such inquiries. The question answers itself. A piety without evidence! A plant without any leaf, bud or fragrance! How absurd! If any where in God's creation, and among his creatures, the evidence of a moral change should be looked for, it is where the heart is yet in its unsophisticated state. It is when, as yet, the cold and chilling atmosphere of earth's influences have not fallen upon and blighted it. If in this early stage we see no proofs of piety, no development heavenward, we are obliged, I think, to infer, though with painful reluctance, that the child is not yet, by regeneration, a child of God. On this point, let us not deceive ourselves. Let us know the worst of the

case, that we may provide for it. Then shall we feel our responsibility, and begin, with prayerful earnestness, the work assigned us in its behalf.

What *is* the work thus assigned us, and how are we to apply this nurture to the infantile state?

#### PARENTAL INFLUENCE, WHEN SHOULD IT BEGIN?

There is a period, I would observe, before divine truth can be understood or felt, when parental influence should be exerted in restraining the motions of the flesh. It is perilous to allow a child to have its own way and will, even prior to the development of that intelligence which is requisite in order to oral instruction. A parent will sometimes say, ‘The little creature cannot now understand, and it would be cruel to restrain it until it can.’ Parental love may easily find reasons, why every whim and wish of the selfish heart should be gratified. In this way, the evil passions may be prematurely developed and strengthened. How often is this the case; and how deplorable is the result! On the other hand, parental influence may be judiciously exerted, in restraining the outbreaks of petulance; in counteracting the selfish and sensual tendencies; and in calming down the ebullitions of passion.

The natural wants of the child being attended to, its caprices and passions should be steadily resisted. Who does not see that, by such a course of early discipline, the impediments to moral instruction, if not removed, will be less powerful than when a system of early and unlimited indulgence is allowed? We do not argue in favor of severity; but we earnestly teach, that a steady and judicious opposition should be maintained, in this early stage of infant existence, to the manifested caprices and passions of its nature. It will then come into our moral school,—not, indeed, without a sinful nature, nor without selfish and sensual passions,—but in a far more hopeful condition for the reception of truth, and the implantation of virtuous principle. This point, I fear, is not enough considered in the practical discipline of children. Parents will sometimes coax and indulge, under circumstances when they ought calmly, but firmly, to resist. They will rack their invention to find out the means of pacifying the child, accumulating around it all the supposed objects of its desires, whilst the petulant little creature is meanwhile casting away everything that is offered, and giving vent to the most outrageous and unbridled passion. Such a course of treatment can surely be no otherwise than disas-

trous. At the period of moral intelligence, when the religious culture is to be applied, this indulgent parent will find the work difficult, if not entirely hopeless. Often is such an one heard to say, 'I know not what to do with my child. I cannot make him do right. I have tried my utmost, and all my efforts seem to be ineffectual.' But this parent, mayhap, did not begin far enough back. He allowed parental love to get the ascendancy of parental duty. He put the reins on the neck of passion, when it should have had the curb. What, therefore, can he expect, but resistance and rebellion?

The moral education can scarcely begin too soon. The first motions of the physical nature are the avenues to it. The first betrayal of passion is the signal for commencing it. The *will* is to be reached, ere the mind can be made intelligently to comprehend the discipline. This being well understood and acted upon, there will be far less difficulty when the opening mind is to be affected by religious instruction.

#### THE RESPONSIBLE SEASON FOR MORAL CULTURE.

We have now arrived at a point of absorbing interest in the educational process; when the



moral character shows itself more decidedly, and the principles of action are taking root for good or for evil. Without attempting to say at what precise period this development takes place,—it being evident that some children are much more precocious than others,—we believe that an intelligent parent, on the watch for every sign of improvement, will be at no loss when the seeds of truth and virtue are to be sown.

The Christian parent will deeply feel the augmented weight of responsibility as he approaches this period of moral culture. He will be anxious to know the method best adapted to train up his child in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord;” to form its habits to virtue and usefulness; and especially to secure its everlasting life.

We address ourselves to such parents, in the hope of rendering some assistance in the interesting and responsible work intrusted to them. We say to them, therefore, teach your children, among the earliest lessons, *their relation to God, as CREATURES, and as SINNERS.*

Every parent who attempts it, experiences the difficulty of conveying to the mind of the child, *abstract* ideas. The reflective faculty, which is the medium of such instruction, is but feebly, if at all, operative in early childhood. The senses

are then awake and busy ; storing the mind with images and ideas, to be in after life the material on which reason and reflection are to act. The senses are the pioneer servants of the soul. A parent's ingenuity is tasked in restraining, rectifying, and guiding the young curiosity, in its inquiries and conclusions, amid the world of wonders which is opening upon it. Let him exercise the patience that is requisite. Let him see to it that *true*, and not *false* impressions, are being made. Let him stand at the gateway of the mind, and take care that nothing enters which shall be a foundation of subsequent skepticism. The child should never have it in his power to say, in after life, 'Through parental indifference or impatience, you allowed me to receive erroneous impressions.'

We can scarcely overstate the importance of truth, in its purest forms, even with regard to those ideas which the senses supply, and which are the first material on which the reasoning faculties operate.

But can the young querist be made to comprehend subjects, which are out of the region of sensible ideas ; and may the parent commence a system of moral and religious inculcation at this early period ? I answer, Yes ; and the sooner the better. This natural curiosity which tasks his

patience, in explaining material things, is but a development of *soul*. It is the moral faculty, asking for the implements of its future occupation. It is that very faculty which distinguishes man from the brute beast, whose knowledge is instinctive rather than acquired; and although, according to the course of nature, the senses are first busied in gathering together the ideas of the external world, yet will the moral faculty very early respond to those which belong to the higher relations of our being.

#### THE IDEA OF GOD.

There is in the young immortal a quick perception of its accountability. This is felt first towards the parent, and then, by a natural and easy transition, towards the Great Parent of all. How interesting is the moment, when the great idea, 'God,' is first presented to the young inquirer! He has begun to reason. He is asking, with intense interest, after the causes of this and of that; how one thing differs from another; and how the diversified frame-work of nature can be so and thus? Then may be introduced the great primary idea of a Creator and a Governor, the Author and the End of all things. The effect

is quickly perceived on the young mind. There is awe ; there is wonder. The idea may at first be but faintly conceived ; and many embarrassing thoughts may come along with it, giving rise to questions which it may require much wisdom to answer, and which, in some instances, are unanswerable. Still the soul has begun to struggle with the thought, and to feel its influence. The child has found a power above that of the parent, and a tribunal to which both child and parent are responsible.

From this moment the moral faculties are more distinctly at work. Conscience begins to suggest the ideas of right and wrong. The character begins to develop, and the great work of religious culture is begun. From this period onward, every lawful means should be used, to enlighten the mind, to fix the principles, and to save the soul.

In this religious culture, the child's relation to God, as its creator, is, of course, an elementary idea. It is an idea easily imparted. It so happens, that the construction and modification of material things, for ornamental and useful purposes, is constantly going on before its eyes. He sees it amid the household arrangements, and it meets him in all his walks abroad. He is unrav-

eling, for his own amusement, the piece of network that accidentally falls into his hands, or breaking and reconstructing the toy that is purchased for his gratification. The idea of construction is thus very early fixed in his young mind. It is not a difficult process, therefore, to raise that mind to the conception of the Great Maker of all things. And here his own body furnishes an ever present illustration. All nature, too, is a school. Every beautiful object; every curious animal; the seed that vegetates; the flower that is unfolding; the rain-drop, and the dew-drop; the sun-beam; the air; the ocean;—all, whilst they administer delight, administer also instruction. In this school, where silent nature unrolls her page, stands the parent and his infant pupil. Can he want motives or means to lead that infant soul through nature up to nature's God? Had he nothing more in view than the expansion and improvement of the mind; its early appreciation of the sublime and beautiful in nature; he might well thus inculcate the connection, as cause and effect, of God, with all the wonders and glories of creation. But the Christian parent has a higher object in view. He aims to lay deep, in the youthful heart, the impression of its relations and

its responsibility to this unseen and almighty Being ; to fix that all-controlling idea, of an omnipresent and omniscient God.

There is, so to speak, a natural aptitude, in every young mind, to receive such an impression. Atheism is the wish of a wicked heart, rather than the conviction of the intelligent mind. Dreadful as the belief of a God is, to one who determines to indulge in sin, it is an idea, nevertheless, which skepticism cannot wholly eradicate. Deep in the moral nature, has the Creator laid a foundation for this great primary truth ; and early, almost in infancy, will the conscience respond to it.

This truth—the being of God—is the great lever to be used in all the subsequent training of the soul. There is a God, who made, and who governs all ; a Being, not only of infinite power but of spotless purity. There is a God to whom all are responsible ; who weighs the actions of young and of old ; whose eye scans even the most secret thoughts ; and who will bring into judgment every work, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Can a child not be made to understand this ? Does not the embryo principle of such responsibility stir in his very nature ? Has it not begun

to move under the parental government? It is surely, then, no difficult thing to awaken it more fully in relation to the great Governor of all.

So far, even natural religion might serve to aid us. But natural religion has obscured the just idea of God. It has made him anything but the true God. It has even "changed his glory into an image, made like unto corruptible man." Thanks be to God that, in behalf of ourselves and of our children, we have something more and something better than the light of nature. We have God in the Bible. We there learn his true character, and our relations to him. This book, then, is our guide. It is the great lesson-book, from which the soul is to take its elementary and its ultimate instructions; its axioms and its demonstrations; its simple alphabet and its sublimest combinations. In this book, the weakest intellect may begin its researches, and the strongest and best disciplined minds may profitably pursue theirs. It is a book for all. It is like the sun, whose beam, shooting through a crevice, may amuse and interest a child, whilst it furnishes, at the same time, an occasion for the prismatic glass of the philosopher. Be grateful, ye parents, that God has given you this celestial light; that he has put into your hands this great lesson-book for eter-

nity. Make the use of it which he enjoins. Train up your children in its admonitions. It is the thesaurus, out of which you are to gather that wisdom, which is better than rubies, and more precious than fine gold. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of such wisdom. To fear God is thus the first great lesson of childhood.

PROPER VIEWS OF GOD'S CHARACTER TO BE  
INCULCATED.

But the child must have something beside an abstract idea of God. In holding up before him simply the notion of a great and omnipotent Creator, there is danger of producing in his mind slavish fear rather than filial confidence. Omnipotence is not the only light in which God presents himself. He chooses to take the appellation of a father, and to recognize us as his children. "I have nourished and brought them up as children." "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us."

This recognition of the relation of God to his creatures, as the great Parent of all, is as endearing as it is condescending. It is one too, which, from the analogous position of an earthly parent, can be readily comprehended by our children.



The providential care everywhere manifested, in the abundant and appropriate provision which the Great Benefactor has made for all his creatures, affords constant occasion for the inculcation of a grateful spirit. It associates God, in the young mind, with everything that is beneficent in his works. It begets confidence in him, as that Being who, clothing the grass of the field, and providing for the birds of the air, will assuredly take care of his more highly endowed creatures.

It has been asserted, as we think calumniously, that because our religion sets God before us as the hater and avenger of sin, it is calculated to beget a terrific and morbid dread of him ; that our system is repugnant to beautiful and alluring views of the divine character. As this is a mere matter of opinion, it is sufficient to say, that *we* see no such necessary result. The question about our religion is simply, whether it is *true* ? Is it the religion of the *Bible* ? We say, it *is* ; that in this Bible, God does reveal himself as a sin-hating, sin-avenging God. “Sin is that abominable thing which his soul hateth.” And with all his tendencies to mercy, “he will by no means clear the guilty.” Now does true religion, founded on such a revelation of God’s character and purpose, beget erroneous or unworthy views

of him? It is a moral solecism to assert it. The alluring features of the divine character, we are as apt to dwell upon as any other class of religious men. Because we believe in his justice, do we, therefore, never speak of his mercy? Because we say he will punish sin, and sinners, being impenitent, do we, therefore, deny that on certain conditions he will pardon? It is true we do speak of his *whole* character. We would not give our children an imperfect or partial representation of the divine Being, as some may deem it expedient to do. We entertain no fears of any bad result in speaking of God, just as the Bible speaks of him. Indeed, we are solemnly bound so to do. We deem this course best, because there is no deception in it; and because it is the only way to secure the end we have in view, viz., the salvation of our children.

But we can, and we *do* lead the inquisitive mind out among God's glorious works, and inculcate those lessons which such diversified beauty and grandeur are calculated to inspire. This is all-important as laying a basis for that conviction of personal ingratitude and sinfulness, which naturally arises from a contrasted view of God's goodness and the creature's obduracy and neglect. See

what God has done for thee, we say ; and then behold thy own ingratitude and forgetfulness of him. Thus is brought to view another very important relation which our children sustain to God, viz., that of *sinners*.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE RELATION OF CHILDREN TO GOD AS SINNERS.

Selfishness the great antagonistical principle to truth and virtue—the child to be apprised of its naturally evil heart—how it may be impressed with the nature and turpitude of sin—by the law is the knowledge of sin—its use in convincing the child of his delinquencies—this course has been excepted to—the objections considered—our ideas of youthful depravity stated—the effect of our inculcations on the child—conviction necessary to conversion—to the appreciation of redemption by Christ—children placed under the tutelage of the law—what is the duty of Orthodox Christians on this point—can children understand the doctrines?—the great end of all these inculcations, viz., their conversion to God.

CREATIVE power and goodness cast the thoughts back upon *man*, for whom all this lavish expenditure seems to have been made. The creature, however, is seen to be cold and indifferent towards the Great Benefactor. He is found greedily appropriating the gifts of Providence, but unthankful in their reception, and intemperate in their enjoyment. He perverts to purposes of sinful indulgence a world, the use of which he is allowed; but the abuse of which, by the law of God, is

forbidden. There is a spontaneous and universal selfishness—the root of all other evils—which springs forth from a corrupt nature, the common inheritance of us all.

What parent does not discover in this selfishness the antagonist principle of all the good which he aims to inculcate? Must not the child be apprised of this naturally evil heart? Must he not be given to understand, that it is this which lies at the basis of all wrong conduct; that not that which goeth into a man defileth, but that which cometh out of him, even out of his heart; “that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”?

If the child shall have been regenerated in infancy, it will subscribe to the truth of this; for it will have, in its own young experience, in the earliest struggles against temptation, the evidence of a strong natural tendency to sin. If the child has not been thus early regenerated, his conscience will not be slow to endorse these views of natural depravity. He will see enough, under the most favorable circumstances, and in the exercise of a more than ordinarily amiable temper, to convince him that his Bible speaks truth, when it says, “Foolishness,” another name for sin, “is bound in the heart of a child.”

HOW SHALL THE CHILD BE IMPRESSED WITH THE  
NATURE AND TURPITUDE OF SIN ?

In order to impress a child with the nature and turpitude of sin, one of the most important considerations should be a right understanding of the *divine law*. He must have a standard of right and wrong ; one that will apply to an every-day, practical experience ; one that is of universal application, and that has the sanction of the great Jehovah. The law of the Ten Commandments is just such a standard. Keeping in view, as of the highest importance, a conviction of sin, such a conviction as shall lead to a thorough conversion from sin, we must, among the earliest lessons, inculcate the obligations of God's law ; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Children may be made to see its application and its extent. Its two great principles are not difficult of inculcation or of comprehension. To love God with all the heart, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, is a form of condensed morality and virtue which even childhood may be made to understand. Recognizing the obligation, they may be led to see and feel their deficiency. Selfishness, the sin of all, and the undisguised sin of childhood, will be discov-

ered and rebuked in the light of this holy law. God commands us to teach our children his statutes, and commends his servant Abraham for so doing. He has incorporated in this, his law, one precept expressly addressed to the young. He has fortified parental authority, and sustained household discipline, by a command that meets and rebukes the sin of disobedience. The Christian parent will feel obliged to use it daily, to refer to it on all occasions of delinquency, and to make it a means not only of restraint but of conviction. He will sit down by the side of his child and say, ‘See here, thy conduct, in this and that particular, is a direct violation of this holy law. God commands thee thus, and thou hast done contrary to this precept. See in this pure mirror thy sin, and know that thy heart is not right in the sight of God.’

We are aware that this full and frank exposure of the natural depravity and practical sin of our children, has been excepted to, and condemned, by those who look upon childhood as a state of innocence. We are called rigid, morose, even cruel, in this application of truth to the sins and follies of the young. It is actually made an argument against our doctrinal views. Our religion is pronounced severe, and contrary to the joyous spirit

of Christianity. But these objections to the course we recommend, are too indiscriminate to have any weight. If we believed that childhood was a state of absolute innocence, as some profess to believe—that the young heart is pure and naturally fit for heaven, as some even declare—we should indeed deem it cruel to overcloud, by the dark shadow of sin, so fair and beautiful a morning. But whilst we admit that childhood is *comparatively* an innocent state, we do not believe that it is sinless, nor that it is naturally fit for heaven. Our views, as already explained, go to show that children are born with a sinful nature, which can be fitted for heaven only by a change of heart. We are free to confess that our views of Christian truth do modify the moral treatment of our children; and the only, or all-important question is, Are these views such as are found in the Bible?

It might seem to some, more the expression of love, to keep our children as far as possible ignorant of their true state and condition as sinners; to open the vista of the future, and plant it only with flowers, and color it only with rainbow hues. This, to some, would sound very fine, and seem very loving. But we, who fear our children may be lost, or die in their sins; who know, from God's word, that unless renewed, they *will* be;



may show our affection in a way very different, but quite as sincere as those who believe another doctrine, and pursue a different plan. Children must not be indulged and gratified at the expense of truth, and at the hazard of their perdition. An Orthodox Christian parent could not sleep easy on his pillow, if he did not teach his children that they were lost sinners; and that, to enter a holy heaven, they must have a renewed, that is, a holy heart. Is this cruel, or morose? Would it not be far more cruel, to keep them ignorant of their true state and condition as sinners? And as to casting over life's early dawn the clouds of disappointment, or abstracting a single joy from their young existence, we are willing to compare results with any more plausible, but less scriptural system. All we aim at is, the true and permanent happiness of our children; and this, we think, cannot be attained, until sin is repented of, and a Saviour is embraced. We aim to take a course, in respect to them, that shall not fill us with agony and self-reproach, provided we are called to commit them to an early tomb. With our views of their state and condition as children of the apostasy—views which our Bible has taught us, and which experience has confirmed—we cannot answer it to our

consciences, if we allow them to live and die in ignorance of their relation to God as sinners.

But this conviction is necessary, moreover, in order to their perception and appreciation of the way of salvation. Suppose we allow them to grow up in self-complacent views of their own characters ; keeping out of sight the fact that they are born in sin, and that, judged by the divine law, they are under condemnation ; what would probably be the effect ? They might, perhaps, by such a course, be enabled to enjoy with less compunction the pleasures of sin ; but assuredly they would not learn its turpitude, nor God's displeasure against it, nor God's method of removing it. They would not be likely to ask, " What must I do to be saved ? "

Conviction of sin is indispensable to an appreciation of the great salvation. The reason so many misunderstand Christ's character as a divine Saviour, is because they do not understand and realize their own character as lost sinners. Our views of Christ will be greatly modified by previous convictions of sin, according as such convictions are more or less deep. If we view our sins only as faults, errors, aberrations—as in the soft phraseology of some they are denominated—we shall not

need a very thorough cleansing, nor a priceless blood to atone for them. But if, in our convictions, they are ‘as scarlet and as crimson’—if we are forced to exclaim, “Behold, I am vile;” ‘my sins are as an heavy burden, too heavy for me’—we shall then see no hope of forgiveness but by an atonement, such as “God manifest in the flesh” alone could accomplish.

Shall we not, then, place our children under the tutelage of that law, which is a school-master to lead them to Christ? If we wish them to go to him for life and salvation, they must go in the only way which is pointed out,—the way of conscious ill desert, the strait and narrow way; humbling themselves at his feet on account of their sins, and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, save us, or we perish.’

Others may choose a different path; may leave the religious training of their children to the priesthood; or may instruct them simply in the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; but Protestant and Orthodox Christians are bound, by their very principles, to make more thorough work; to go deeper into the moral wants of the soul; to lay open the disorder of the heart; and to hold up the only remedy, which is repentance for sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who do not admit that a change of heart is necessary, will not, of course, seek it either for themselves or for their children. They will build only on the foundation which nature has laid, will aim at moral restraints and external accomplishments ; but we, who think that men are born in sin, and that, to be saved, must be born again to holiness, will employ all the means which God has appointed to secure so blessed and desirable an end.

#### CAN CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE DOCTRINES ?

But how, methinks I hear one say, can children be made to understand these teachings ? Why should we address such profound truths to minds so imperfectly developed ? Can these little ones comprehend their relation to God as creatures and as sinners ? Why not postpone these lessons until they attain to greater maturity ?

I answer ; children can and do understand these truths. They have, in a thousand instances, given evidence, not only of understanding them, but of a practical and saving application of them. He who suggests the doubt on this point, forgets that every child has a moral nature which seeks this very aliment. His first questions are about

God, and his first impressions are those of responsibility. He forgets, too, that the Holy Spirit can enlighten this young heart, and often does; so that 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God perfects his praise.' He forgets, does he not, how many die in childhood, just as they have entered on the period of responsibility; and in the last struggles, may ask for light and for guidance which, through inconsideration or unfaithfulness, may have been denied them.

These are considerations which influence us to an early training of the soul in the great and fundamental truths of the Bible. Believing, as we do, that these truths are made use of by the Holy Spirit to convict and to sanctify; and hoping, as we may, that a faithful presentation of them, simplified so far as possible, and oft-repeated, will be attended by an enlightening and saving influence; we commence, at the very outset of their intelligent existence, to sow in our children's minds this incorruptible seed. Nor are Christian parents discouraged if, at first, no signs of spiritual germination appear. In the morning they are to sow the seed, and in the evening to withhold not their hand. Their trust is in the covenant faithfulness of Abraham's God. To Him having dedicated their offspring, for Him should they assidu-

ously train them up. The great end of all these inculcations is, *their conversion to God*. Its realization should be our chief desire and constant prayer, and its indication and evidence our unwavering expectation.

Is it sometimes represented that we expect our children to grow up in sin, and that we look not for their conversion until adult years? What then means our Sabbath school instruction, our catechetical teaching, our domestic altar, our fire-side readings, our maternal associations? Is there, by Christian parents, no groaning and soul-travailing, in secret prayer, for the conversion of their children? Is there no solicitude, no earnest longing for the tokens of spiritual life, as they meet their beloved charge at the family altar, or watch their expression in the sanctuary of God?

It may be that some parents, in this day of delegated responsibility, leave their children to the care of others, or are satisfied, so to speak, with their chance in the Sabbath school; but that parental faithfulness, and prayer, and anxiety, are withdrawn by truly Christian parents, I do not, and cannot believe. If in the conscience of any, such a charge shall find an echo, let that parent remember, that no instruction from any other quarter, however faithfully inculcated, can release

him from the obligation to train up his children himself, and not by proxy, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." We should be thankful for the Sabbath school, as a grand and efficient auxiliary in the moral and religious training of our youth. In every way possible we should encourage the faithful teacher in his toilsome yet useful work. We should send our children into his hands every Sabbath day, with the evidence that we are co-operating with him in the culture of the soul ; but when the question is, where lies the primary responsibility in regard to the child's Christian education, we must throw it back on the natural guardian, where God himself has lodged it. No parent can get from under this responsibility, and no Christian parent would wish to. He would have his children bound up with himself in the same bundle of eternal life. From whatsoever other fields of usefulness he may be excluded, this, he is sure, is put under his immediate culture. Next to his own soul, in regard to responsibility, come the souls of his children. They bear his image ; they live in his presence ; they catch his varying expressions ; they are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. So intimate is the relation, so constant the influence, direct and indirect, that he may almost be said to develop his

own character through theirs. What they believe, as matters of faith ; what they feel and how they conduct themselves, are traceable, in most instances, to parental example and influence. It is true that sometimes an infidel parent will have a Christian child, and a Christian parent an infidel child. These are exceptions to a general rule. They mark a sovereignty which none can explain, and at which none should cavil. But who does not see and know that, usually and uniformly, the seed sown produces a corresponding crop ; so that we may say of parental teaching, in its bearings on the future character and destiny of the child, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Let this responsibility be acknowledged. Let us act under a sense of it, praying that wherein we lack wisdom to meet it, and to fulfill the duties implied in it, God would, according to his promise, impart such wisdom, and thus enable us to 'bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'



## CHAPTER VI.

### CHILDREN LED TO CHRIST.

A sense of sin prepares for this—the family a type of the divine government—obedience to parents one form of obedience to God—these duties interlaced—Fourierism—the family state affords the occasion for illustrating the duties we owe to God—a child's first idea of sin and retribution here obtained—scriptural idea of forgiveness—the mediatorial idea developed in the family—the great doctrine of the atonement shadowed forth—Christ and his offices pointed out—Christ's example in regard to selfishness—Christ, the end of the law for righteousness—easy to be inculcated—childhood the season of confidence—convictions of childhood—under what circumstances developed—how to be treated—the new field of culture—the power of parental example—parental counsels—a higher type of piety needed as the millennium draws near.

IN teaching children their relation to God as sinners, implying his displeasure and their condemnation, we are bound, in close connection, to point out to them the way of salvation from sin, as it is revealed in the Bible. We must say to them, “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!”

### THE FAMILY A TYPE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

By a wise and benevolent arrangement, God has established the family government as a minia-

ture, though imperfect resemblance of his own. He has recognized the analogy in several respects. He styles himself the Father of the great human family. He speaks of bringing up children, 'who had rebelled against him.' The *family* government is included in the more comprehensive government of God. Its moral discipline must be enforced by the principles which are given to regulate the moral conduct of the more extended family of mankind. The same law is to be the standard of right and wrong, forming the ground of an ultimate appeal to the moral consciousness of both old and young. In this inclusive government, the divine and the parental, we are furnished with an occasion for the illustration of those duties which the religion of the Bible enjoins. Obedience to the parent is one form of obedience to God. Disobedience to the former, commanding what is lawful and right, is actual rebellion against the latter, who has said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." How beautifully interlaced are these twofold moral duties. What mutual support do they afford ; and how necessary is the family relation, in order to the preservation of morality and the perpetuity of religion. Yet are there men, who, with sacrilegious hands, would uproot even "this only bliss of paradise, which

has survived the fall." They hate and would destroy the family relation, because it is the exponent of God's higher government, and the great buttress of religion and morality.

This relation affords occasion, we have said, for the illustration of principles and duties enjoined in the word of God. For example, disobedience under the parental government, gives the first idea of *sin*. The young transgressor, ere he can comprehend his relation to God, knows what it is to violate the law of the household. He is amenable to the parental tribunal. He knows that under this economy, sin and punishment are conjoined. Hence his first impression also of retribution. He is called to an account, and when convicted, he must suffer some sort of punishment. But how eagerly does the affectionate parent look for the signs of repentance. How indispensable, in his view, is the exercise of sincere sorrow, ere there can be any hope of a permanent good conduct. Hence it is a point of no small importance, to show the young delinquent what true repentance is ; to discriminate between that sorrow which looks more at the *punishment* of the crime, than mourns over its *turpitude* ; which expresses regret at its penal consequences, but no realizing sense of the wrong itself.

## SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF FORGIVENESS.

So also a ready and indiscriminate forgiveness, is seen to weaken if not actually destroy the household government. There must be *penalties*, as well as laws. Where there is crime, there must be confession and sorrow ; and, ordinarily, where there is violation of law, there should be punishment.

The family government, being in a sense a sort of exponent of the divine government, it is not difficult to illustrate to the mind of a child the one by the other.

The family government admits, occasionally, of mediation or intercession. One member taking pity on another, who is a temporary outcast from the pale of domestic approbation, pleads for his forgiveness and restoration ; and not seldom is the delinquent, by means of this intercessor, and upon expressing his repentance, reinstated in the favors and enjoyments of the household. What is this, but a familiar type of the readiness of our heavenly Father to receive the penitent, through the intercessions of a mediator, duly appointed and properly qualified ? The parent, by the very relation which he sustains, sees how important is

this great doctrine of atonement and intercession, whereby sinners may be reconciled to that higher authority which has been set at naught. Will he hesitate, then, to point his child to the Lamb of God, who alone taketh away the sin of the world?

There is not a more delightful, as there certainly is not a more useful employment, than to lead the young mind to a consideration of the work and the offices of Christ. It is not merely his example that we may use for the benefit of our children, in stimulating them to purity and virtue, but "his obedience unto death," constituting an atonement for sin, which is the great idea of the gospel, we may put before them, as the strongest incentive to repentance and faith.

How invaluable, too, in a world given to self-seeking, and upon hearts which are by nature hearts of stone, is the influence of that great revealed fact, that "Christ pleased not himself;" that he came on an errand of disinterested love; that, "though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor." What a powerful lesson is thus furnished us and our households of benevolence?—a lesson which the parent may recur to amid the conflicts of selfishness, too often waged within the family circle. But the death of Christ voluntarily

endured for sin, is the great fact of the New Testament, as it was the foreshadowed idea of the Old. Herein is the question answered, how God can be just in pardoning a sinner. Is this too recondite, too hard for a childish understanding? What is there hard about it? The child may be made to understand that God hates sin, and that the sinner is guilty, and is exposed to the wrath of God; that all that he can do cannot take away his sins, nor atone for them; that he needs one who is in the confidence of God, to stand for him and to plead for him, and that such a mediator is found in the Lord Jesus Christ;—all this, it seems to me, can be made intelligible to a young mind, and more easily, sometimes, than to one of adult age.

In teaching children their sinfulness, and in setting before them, as we must, the law of God and its penalty, how naturally and how readily, also, shall we point out the doctrine here disclosed, that Christ is “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world;” and that “he is also the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” This is one form of “the admonition of the Lord.” The child is to be admonished of its sinfulness, and of the consequent necessity of repentance towards God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To encourage

the Christian parent in these teachings, he is assured that the Saviour once expressed a special interest in children, taking them in his arms, and pronouncing upon them his benediction. We should not doubt the capability of children to exercise faith in the Son of God. Childhood is the season of confidence. The ingenuous mind has not yet learned to cavil at well attested facts. Its little hand is, as it were, extended for help. Was there ever a child to whose mind, first instructed in its relations to God as a sinner, the presentation of Christ's atonement and intercession did not come with affecting interest and application? If the young heart shows conviction of sin, as we know it often does, can any doubt that it may exercise faith, as we hope and believe it often has?

Where is the Christian parent who has not, at times, discovered in the heart of his child these early indications of the Spirit's power! A mysterious pressure will sometimes be found upon its soul. It will come to the parent's knee with a serious and anxious look. This altered expression leads the parent to inquire into the cause. The reply is, 'Oh, I am so great a sinner.' Is this a fact of very uncommon occurrence? It may take place when no special act of disobedience has

been perpetrated. The feeling has stolen in upon the young heart, by a train of thought which none can trace but the omniscient One who suggested it. In this case, we are to recognize the Spirit of God, moving by times upon the tender conscience, and thus inviting parental co-operation in guiding the soul to Jesus. If that young heart can thus early feel its need of help, showing that it is not only susceptible of conviction, but is really and truly convicted of sin, why may not faith in Christ be exercised, and the evidence be obtained of forgiveness through his blood?

Many is the instance, we doubt not, where this faith has been exercised, and where the implantation of grace was coeval almost with the first buddings of the mind. How many beautiful examples are on record of this early and almost infantile faith. How many such have gone to people the world of blessedness, and to expand amid the more congenial atmosphere of heaven.

#### SEASONS OF YOUTHFUL CONVICTION, HOW TREATED.

Why is it that seasons of conviction in childhood are apt to be transient, to be so soon succeeded by an apparent indifference? Are not parents, in many instances, responsible for it?



Alarmed at the unusual occurrence, and sympathizing with the distress of the child, they seek to counteract and expel these feelings. They reason them away as inappropriate or absurd. They give the child to understand that he is not so guilty, and that his soul is not in so much danger as his fears would suggest; and if this course is not successful, they continue, by some new or exciting pleasures, to divert him from the painful contemplation. This is taking a fearful responsibility. How came the child by these feelings? They often appear without any apparent cause. There is a mystery in their coming, if not in their departure. Who can doubt that they are of God; that He, whose office it is to convince of sin, is executing that office on the young and susceptible heart? What a fearful responsibility, then, does that parent assume, who makes a deliberate attempt to counteract the strivings of the Holy Spirit!

What, under these circumstances, is the parent's duty? Why, evidently, to co-operate with the apparent design of the Spirit of God; and when the child comes and tells the parent, with tearful eyes and a breaking heart, that he feels himself a sinner, to say to it, 'Yes, my child, it is true, you *are* a sinner, and God is convincing you of it;' and then to show the child wherein

he has sinned. Let the parent take this opportunity to explain the turpitude of sin, its violations of God's law, and the consequent condemnation ; for the Spirit will now help the child to see sin in its true light. But must the parent stop here ? By no means. This very sensibility to sin, which is now felt and manifested, prepares the way for holding up the Saviour, as "the way, the truth, and the life." The parent should now say, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." It seems as if the Holy Spirit, by these early convictions, bids us lead the soul at once to Jesus. It is only by such a course that we can fall in with "the admonition of the Lord."

This, we say, is a grateful task to a truly Christian parent ; and oh, what joy must that parent's heart experience, if, by his prayers and his teachings, this young inquirer is led to exercise faith in the atoning Lamb. He is now, in a twofold sense, a child. This new or second birth, links the soul of the child and of the parent together forever.

#### THE NEW FIELD OF CULTURE.

But these incipient and early convictions may soon disappear, even where the fostering hand of

piety is at work to cherish them. Still should they be regarded as foreshadowings of covenant blessings, and their recurrence should be anxiously and prayerfully looked for.

But should these convictions result in the hopeful conversion of the child,—as many times we think is the case,—then has the parent not only a new theme of praise, but a new and most hopeful field of culture. The child is now to receive its type of Christian character, in a great measure, from the formative influence of the parent. Here is a new phase of responsibility. Religion, in that child's heart, is a precious and incorruptible seed in a soil not the most congenial. That soil is to be enriched, and that seed to be nurtured, so that what is now but a blade, scarcely visible, may grow into a stalk, and then into the full ear; and at length be gathered, like a shock of corn, fully ripe into the heavenly garner. The parent is the natural and responsible cultivator of this plant of righteousness. His example is to act constantly on the developing character. His Spirit is to be breathed into the unfolding emotions. If the child regards him in the twofold light of a Christian and a parent, he will feel as much bound to imitate him in the one character as he does to obey him in the other? What the parent does

and says ; the principles he professes ; the spirit he shows, being ever under the eye of the observing child, must necessarily, one would think, impress upon him a certain type of character. And such is generally the case. Here is a motive for a parent to cultivate his own spirit, in order to influence that of his child. The unconscious influence is as constant, if not as great, as the direct influence. The direct influence respects the counsels and teachings which the Christian parent gives, with a view of forming the Christian character of his child. And here I know of but one standard, one rule of faith and practice, ever accessible and always obligatory. His child's Christian character is to be formed and fostered according to the precepts and the spirit of the Bible. We assume that he is in a state of grace ; that a genuine conversion has taken place ; and the development of Christian character is to go on, under the eye and by the influence of the parent. Affection for the child unites with a sense of responsibility to God, to impel a conscientious Christian parent to do everything in his power to train this child for usefulness and for heaven.

#### PARENTAL EXAMPLE.

Parental example is of the first consideration. It is the atmosphere in which the child lives. If

it is pure and wholesome, he will thrive ; but if it is noxious, he will be sickly or dwarfish. If, in the parent, religion is seen to be a mere matter of form, a mere Sabbath day service, whilst the whole tenor of things through the week is that of the world, the child may at first wonder at the inconsistency ; but will be likely, ere long, to settle down to the same tone of lifeless formality. If a parent may profess religion and still be gay ; a devotee of fashion, or a lover of pleasure ; why should we expect any thing better in the child ?

A youth just springing into manhood, becomes pious. He is at first very zealous, ready to meet every cross, to brave the opposition of the world, and thus prove a true disciple of the self-denying Jesus. But it may so happen that the father of this youth, being also a professed disciple of the Saviour, sympathizes not with these noble aspirations. His heart has grown cold in the service of the world. He ventures to intimate that his son is righteous over-much ; that there is no need of all this zeal ; and that religion may be attended to in its proper place. Conformably to this counsel, the father himself exhibits no particular interest in the promotion of piety within the sphere of his influence. Is it possible, with such an example, that the son, however promising may be his con-

version, will reach a high and scriptural standard of piety? It is barely possible. God will sometimes carry forward his own work, in despite of obstructions. But how much oftener will this cold and chilling atmosphere freeze up the fountains of youthful piety, and cast a dark shadow over all the future prospects of the young convert! Who is to blame, if this youthful Christian loses his zeal, because in his own endeared circle he finds no co-operation? or who is responsible, if, in a few years, he is seen doing homage to mammon, with a zeal as ardent as that which he once expressed in the service of God?

#### PARENTAL COUNSELS.

If the *example* be not what it should be, then can we not expect that Christian duty will be either frequently or faithfully inculcated. Parental counsels will have more respect to success in the world, or acceptableness among men, than to the formation of a character accordant with Scripture inculcations and the example of Christ.

But we hope better things of Christian fathers and mothers, whose prayers and anxieties have been expressed in tears and in entreaties for the conversion of their children. It will be their aim, I

trust, so soon as they discover the evidences of conversion, to spare no pains and withhold no influence which, under God, may lead the child on from first principles to perfection. I use the word perfection, in the same sense in which the Apostle used it, as marking an increase of knowledge, and a growth in grace, which characterize the maturity of Christian character. Piety is but a seminal principle that is to be cultivated, under influences that are evangelical, and by efforts both pastoral and parental. The minister should do his part, and the parent and Sabbath school teacher theirs. The aim of all should be to do what in them lies, to lay a scriptural basis for a growing and influential piety. As we advance towards the millennial age, personal religion should take a type appropriate to so glorious an era ; the hope and the har-binger of its approach. How can we expect to see such a bright day overspreading our earth, without seeing, as its sure prognostic, a higher and a holier aim, a purer example, and a more un-reserved consecration !

It is often said that the rising generation are the hope of the country ; and on this ground the community are taxed to educate them, and parents are urged to elevate and improve their characters in all the requisites for public usefulness. But if

they are the hope of the country, are they not also the hope of the church? And if their preparation for secular life is so important, how much more important is it to prepare them to uphold the institutions of religion, and to aid in bringing on the triumphs of redemption! Happily the claims of the state, though secondary in importance, are not antagonistical, in their nature, to those of the church; for he who is prepared to serve his God, is prepared to serve his generation; and the highest style of patriotism is to be found in that breast where dwell the true principles of gospel piety.

I close by saying to all who stand in the relation of parents, and especially to such as have consecrated their children to God, you are, as a first consideration, to expect and pray for their regeneration and conversion. You are authorized and encouraged to do so.

If it shall have pleased God to have answered your prayers, and to have blessed your instructions so that you have the evidence that your children are within the fold of Christ, then, as the next important consideration, I entreat you, by a holy example, and a faithful inculcation of Christian duty as laid down in the Scriptures, to lead them forward in the path that grows "brighter and



brighter." Be it yours to illustrate the beautiful language of the poet, which he applies to the faithful pastor in relation to his flock, but which is equally applicable to you in relation to your converted children :—

" But in his duty prompt, at every call,  
He watched, and wept ; he prayed, and felt for all.  
And as a bird each fond endearment tries,  
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

Abraham's position as he stood related to succeeding believers—commendatory notices of the patriarch—his faithfulness in the religious training of his children and household—faithful, anterior to the covenant—the latter both strengthening and encouraging him—in like manner, is the operation of the covenant *now*—divine wisdom and goodness to be recognized in the covenant—external services imply the weakness of our nature, and are helpful—the external formality not religion, only an aid to it—error of the papists—Quakers on the other extreme—stipulations of the Abrahamic covenant—perfecting of this covenant—whom it embraced—the seal of the covenant—its recognition in baptism—no new edict required in regard to children's membership of the church—no abridgment of their privileges under the new dispensation—reasoning of the Apostles on this point—the covenant had in view mainly spiritual privileges—bearings of the covenant on the increase of the church—sad and criminal neglect of Christian parents—exhortation to the discharge of duties connected with this covenant.

THE character of Abraham is equally interesting to both Jews and Gentiles. He is, in truth, the father of us all. All true believers are the seed of Abraham. By virtue of their union with Christ—who is the promised seed—they lose their distinctive or national character, and become one spiritual community, one associated fraternity, professing the same hopes, and claiming equal privileges; whether formerly they were 'Jews or

Gentiles, Barbarians, Scythians, bond or free.' At the head of this fraternity stands the patriarch Abraham, holding manifestly a peculiar relation to all succeeding believers. He is called in the Scriptures, "the father of all them that believe." This implies, not only that his faith was pre-eminent, but that he was constituted a sort of model character and federative head, in the long line of believers.

Among other commendatory notices of this venerable man, one of the most important and interesting is, his faithfulness in the religious training of his household. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." We may suppose that Abraham had such a sense of the importance of this duty, that, prior to all stipulations or covenant engagements, he would have felt himself bound to discharge it towards his household. Understanding, as he must have done, the connection between religious instruction and the salvation of the soul, there can be no doubt that, prior to all special revelations and injunctions, his household were trained up in the principles of the true religion. He seems to have had a great abhorrence of idolatry. For this reason, as well as by the command

of God, he became a voluntary exile in a strange land. His household was a little moving colony ; himself, in the character of a priest, at the head of it. Whilst all around him there was darkness, in his little community there was light. Whilst every where rose the hideous emblems of idol-worship, he built along the stages of his pilgrimage the simple altar of stones, and laid upon it the appointed sacrifice. His household was, in fact, the depository of the true religion.

But what was done by the patriarch in the religious training of his family, through the ordinary solicitude of a pious heart, received a new impulse after God was pleased to enter into covenant with him—to give him, by promise and by miracle, a son in his old age, and to constitute him a sort of head or prototype of succeeding believers. The Bible recognizes a connection between the faithful training of his household in the divine precepts, and the fulfillment of those promises which were embraced in the covenant. “That the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

We may argue, in like manner, that whilst a pious parent might feel a natural prompting to attend to the spiritual training of his children, and, irrespective of covenant obligations, might

do something in this way ; yet, where a covenant obligation is superadded, there is still an augmented motive to faithfulness ; so that the discharge of duties, which pious solicitude suggests, would be rendered more imperative by the pressure of covenant obligations. Thus would it be more certain that he would train up his children to fear God, and to keep his commandments. And as in the case of Abraham, the promises and provisions of the covenant were connected with faithfulness in this duty ; so also with us, there is every reason to believe that our offspring will, through our prayers and teachings, if fervently offered and truthfully inculcated, become not only *nominally*, but *really* partakers of the grace of God.

This is an important train of thought, and deserves some further consideration.

Many who think lightly of the baptismal covenant, are accustomed to argue, that, without any public vows or stipulations, the pious parent has motive enough to educate his child for God ; that no such vows, or professions, or consecrations can give security for the faithful discharge of a duty which parental interest and consistent piety will ordinarily fulfill. But whilst we concede to this statement some degree of plausibility, we must be allowed to say, that, owing to a weakness inherent

in human nature, God has been pleased to add to instinctive love, the additional force of covenant obligations; and thankfully should we acknowledge this auxiliary power in prompting us to the discharge of our duty. We should recognize a divine wisdom, in calling us out, under the solemn sanctions of a covenant, to stipulate before God, angels, and men, that we will put forth all our influence, in the way of example and prayer and scriptural teachings, to secure the salvation of our children.\*

Every thing external, in religion, implies the weakness of our nature. So does every public profession, vow, or consecration. The Jew, who obeyed God in the observance of an external and prescribed ritual, if he were a true Israelite, made not that observance the essential part of his religion. It was only a mere form, or outward sign of it. His religion was of the heart. But who can say that the outward sign was of no use? Did it

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\* In the Presbyterian churches, which are in close fellowship with our own, it is usual, when the child is presented for baptism, for the parent or parents to enter into covenant—promising to train up the child in the fear of God—to set before it a Christian example—to teach it the word of God—to pray with and for it—to teach it to pray; and thus to bring it up in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord,”—an example which we would do well to follow.

not help to bind his thoughts to the Great Being whom he worshiped? So when he fixed upon his child the seal of the covenant, or carried it up with appropriate sacrifices to the temple, and made the consecration of it to God according to the law; he did not, by these overt acts, acquire obligations, but simply recognized them as already existing, and impressed them indelibly on his heart. He was bound, before these acts, to educate his child for the service of Jehovah; but will any one, at all acquainted with human nature, deny that *after* these acts of public and solemn consecration, he realized more fully his obligations so to do?

Most fully do I believe that Abraham would have trained his household in religion, if God had not entered into formal covenant with him; one provision of which covenant related to this very duty. But even in his case, eminent as he was in faith, I am persuaded that the solemn transaction referred to, was another ligature around his soul to bind him to the certain and faithful discharge of this duty.

I should consider myself as impugning the divine wisdom, to think lightly of a prescribed covenant, which had a relation to the performance of our duty, whether parental or personal. I do not contend that the external formality is itself

religion ; and I am aware that some, who differ from me in regard to the covenant under consideration, might take advantage of these remarks to say, that I was looking strongly in favor of papal or puseyistic ceremonies. Not so. There are extremes. The papists are on one extreme, and the Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers, on the other. The papist runs into a religion of forms. Here is his error. The Quaker, by ignoring forms altogether, reducing worship to a mere contemplative exercise, loses the stay and support which scripturally enjoined forms would administer. Between these extremes, there lies a scriptural rule which we would do well to keep in view.

It is for this reason I should prefer, independent of a belief in their divine appointment, the scriptural symbols and expressions of piety, to the very abstract and mere mental religion of the Society of Friends. By this I do not mean to question their piety, but simply to state a preference, in my own case, and founded on my knowledge of human nature, for the outward symbols of religion as auxiliary to the increase of its power.

It were easy to show that piety may exist, and many of its obligations be discharged, without all



the formality of a church organization, without the sacraments, the public vows, the solemn pledges, and the reciprocal covenant among its members ; but a Wisdom that is infinite has arranged all this, and required all this ; and a moment's reflection will convince any man, that if religion, without the circumstances enumerated, *could* exist, it would not be very likely to flourish or to extend itself.

The same principles apply to the obligation of training up our children for the service of God. These obligations exist, we admit, anterior to, and even independent of, our covenant vows ; but these vows and this recognition of the covenant, are all important in giving distinctness and impressiveness to the parental duty, adding another motive, binding around the soul another cord ; that the obligation may press more constantly and heavily upon us.

The entire ceremonial of ancient Israel was framed on this principle. And when seen in this light, how foolish and absurd are the objections which infidels have made to it on the score of puerility or cruelty.

The same is true in relation to the covenant entered into with Abraham and his seed. The stipulations, were faithfulness on his part, and the

fulfillment of the promises on the part of Jehovah. Harmless is the skeptic's sneer, that all this is unworthy of God, or that it looks too much like a bargain or contract. We must consider that God had in view the redemption of his people, and, therefore, it is not unworthy of him thus to condescend to their weaknesses.

The covenant which God made with Abraham was to remain in force, not for one generation alone, but *forever*; and is, therefore, very properly called "an everlasting covenant." A subsidiary design it had, in saving the posterity of Abraham from being mingled with and lost among the nations of the earth. Its higher end, and its more enlarged provisions, had respect to the coming of Christ, and the gathering of all true believers into him as the spiritual seed. Though made originally with Abraham, it was not confined to him, nor to his descendants according to the flesh, but is the property of the whole church, so long as a church shall exist on earth.

Abraham, it appears, was pre-eminent in faith. Still it seemed good, in the sight of God, to bind this man, holy as he was, and full of faith as he was, by special covenant obligations, to fulfill a certain duty towards his household, viz., to train them up in the fear and the service of God.

## SEAL OF THE COVENANT.

This covenant, instituted in the family of the patriarch, had a formal and divinely appointed seal attached to it; and all the descendants of Abraham were required to recognize the covenant, by affixing to their male offspring the seal, and training them according to the divine precepts.

That this arrangement had a powerful influence in promoting family religion, none I presume will deny; and if this, or something analogous to this, be not continued under the New Testament dispensation, we shall have lost a great deal in one respect, whatever we may have gained in others.

If the motive now to educate our children for God be only such as nature prompts, or the ordinary solicitude of piety would suggest; if the covenant is gone, and with it all symbols, rites, and provisions are swept away, I again declare, we have lost a great deal.

If nothing tantamount, in sign or significance, be given to us under the new dispensation, we might also hazard the opinion, that we have lost an important auxiliary to piety; and that our children have even less security now than under a darker and more imperfect dispensation,

that they will be trained up for God and for heaven.

But I am not concerned for the honor of the New Testament dispensation in this respect. I am happy in the belief, that at least no abridgment of our privileges, no lessening of our obligations, marked its introduction. I see nothing that looks like exonerating parents from the duty, the sacred duty they owe to their offspring ; nothing that looks like a command to leave our children in the outer court, and without the sign of the covenant. No repulsive edict is found, whereby they are driven from the pale of the visible church. On the contrary, I find them spoken of, by high authority, as belonging to the “kingdom of heaven ;” a phrase not always used to represent future blessedness, but sometimes, as in this instance, indicating, as I think, the church visible on earth.

It was a principle too well established, to require a new and distinct edict from our Lord, that, under the new dispensation, children should share, as they always had done, in the sign and privileges of the covenant. Hence we are to account, on the one hand, for the absence of such a specific enactment, and, on the other, for the practice of the Apostles in relation to household baptisms ; that no abridgment, in this respect, was

to take place, was taken for granted. So that, instead of losing our privileges as parents, under the new dispensation, or finding them abridged, we have them reproduced in a milder form, and with more merciful associations.

The parent now can feel, and, if a true child of Abraham, will feel, the duty of training his offspring for God ; not only from the promptings of love and piety, but also that he is allowed to add the force of vows and promises made under the Abrahamic covenant. That covenant stands unshaken as the everlasting hills. The abrogation of the Jewish ceremonial touched it not. It fell not with the rites and ceremonies of that dispensation. It was of older date, and was to be of longer continuance. It is this covenant, now in as full force as ever, changed in nothing but the outward sign or seal ; it is this “everlasting covenant,” under which we are permitted to consecrate by baptism our children, in view of the promises which were made first to Abraham, and successively to all his spiritual posterity.

So reasoned one who thoroughly understood the subject. “Now to Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made ;—and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Every true Christian, then, is of the seed of Abraham, and inherits, of course, all the promises made to Abraham. In this respect, his privileges and Abraham's are equal and parallel. The covenant covers them both. There is no abridgment; no spiritual benefit which accrued to him, which does not accrue equally to them. It is clear, then, that we must enjoy the privilege of putting the seal of the covenant upon our offspring, as he did upon his.

It is in vain to neutralize this argument, by referring to temporal pledges, which were included in or connected with this Abrahamic covenant. The Apostles took care to prevent such an inference. Peter said, on the day of pentecost, "The promise is unto you and to your children," referring to the promises of this very covenant, which declaration, of course, could have had no sort of reference to an earthly inheritance. It respected what was infinitely better.

#### THE BEARINGS OF THIS COVENANT ON THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH.

As formerly, so now, God will perpetuate his church under this very covenant, and in the faithful discharge of its implied obligations. If a

parent wishes to feel his responsibility, let him recognize this covenant, assume the vows of faithfulness to his offspring, and promise and bind himself, under its sanction, to educate them for the better world. This is the way to augment the power of principle, and to lay upon the parental heart a new and holy pressure to the discharge of duty.

There is a sad and criminal neglect on this point; and if it goes on and increases, Christians will be made sooner or later to deplore it. There is a tendency in some churches, even where the Abrahamic covenant is recognized, to think lightly of its privileges; to neglect them; to leave the young heritage of God among the aliens; to withhold from Jehovah his due; and thus to weaken the force of family discipline and the motives to family religion. It is time this reproach was rolled off from the church of God. Of them who conscientiously reject the obligations of infant consecration, under this covenant, we have nothing to say, except that we deem them to have lost a very precious and powerful motive to parental faithfulness and household training; but we do think that there lies a terrible responsibility at the door of that parent, who admits that all Christians are Abraham's seed, and are bound to "walk in the steps of faithful Abraham;" who admits this,

and yet refuses to give up his children in the same covenant relation, and to affix upon them the modified, though equally significant seal.

But when these vows have been taken, how have they been fulfilled? Have you, Christian parent, commanded your children, "that they keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment?" Can the high commendatory notice of Abraham be transferred over to yourself? Can you say, that the training of your children for God's service has had more constant and commanding influence over you than all their temporal interests? Has the prayer of faith been poured over them; the force of discipline been exerted, and the power of affectionate persuasion been tried? Have you led them, by your own example, into right paths? Have you constantly looked upon them as 'God's heritage?' Have you remembered the covenant, and pleaded in their behalf its gracious promises and provisions?

If there is any thing which comes home to the parental bosom, it is questioning like this! Allied by blood to the dear ones—held responsible for their training—knowing that what he does and says, every hour of their juvenile existence, is shaping their destiny for good or for evil—how can such a parent neglect any means indicated by



nature or by revelation, which may be sanctified to the good of his children?

He has not discharged his whole duty—he has only *recognized* it—when he has brought his child to God's altar, and had the sacred seal put upon it. Then, and thereafter, must he watch around it as its spiritual guardian, and leave no effort untried to bring it into the ark of salvation. God has given him the promise that he shall not labor in vain. 'The promise is not only to him, but to his children.' Faith, and prayer, and scripture inculcation, will be rewarded by spiritual blessings poured out upon his offspring. To meet them in Heaven, should be his great aim: and oh, that at last he may be able to say, as he stands before the Judge of all the earth, "Here, Lord, am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INFANT BAPTISM AS RELATED TO THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

Object of Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians—an incidental argument thence for infant baptism—baptism (infant) not abrogated with the ceremonial law—reasoning of Paul to this effect—circumcision, its history and original import—Abraham, under a gospel dispensation prospectively—his faith, and the sign or seal of it, viz., the seal of circumcision—a seal of the righteousness of faith—the visible church in the patriarch's family—the seal or sign continued under the Levitical economy no nullification of its continuance or import—the seal being changed or modified as to what is external, to be applied as in the family of Abraham—not restricted to adults—reference to household baptism—additional arguments for infant baptism—identity of the church in all ages—illustrated in the vineyard and in the olive tree—no command for restricting it to adults—household baptism—condition of the primitive church—principles and practice of the Apostles—"believe and be baptized"—Lydia's baptism—the jailer's—Stephanus's—the import of the word *oikos* considered—children included in the idea—this illustrated—another argument—the unbelieving wife, &c.—children of such marriages, how related to the covenant—Dr. Doddridge's opinion.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, one object of the Apostle is to show, that the conduct of Abraham—who was so much venerated, and so constantly appealed to, by the judaizing teachers—was an argument against justification by works, and in favor of justification by faith. We derive a very important incidental argument from the

Apostle's course of reasoning in favor of our practice of infant baptism.

It is alleged, by those who reject infant baptism, that as circumcision was a part of the ceremonial law, and as such was abrogated by Christ, it therefore cannot be appealed to in favor of the practice. We are ready to concede, that if circumcision had never been known until the ceremonial law was given—if it was simply and solely a Jewish rite, having no origin anterior to the Levitical law—there would be some show of reason in the argument. But when did circumcision begin? and what was its original import? It began, as all will admit, with Abraham, four hundred and thirty years before the Levitical law. What was its import? It was “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” “And Abraham received,” says Saint Paul in Romans, “the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised;” and to this end, “that he might be the father of all them that believe.”

Now will any deny that Abraham's faith was of the same nature as that of all other believers? He knew nothing about the Levitical law. He was under a sort of *gospel* dispensation. “For the gospel,” says Paul, “was preached unto Abra-

ham.” In order to constitute him the father—in the sense of a great predecessor in the faith—the father of us all, the scripture (or God by the scripture) “preached before the gospel unto Abraham.” Here, then, we find Abraham under a gospel dispensation, before the legal or ceremonial rites were introduced by Moses ; exercising a faith just such as believers now exercise, only greater in degree. An initiatory rite or seal of this righteousness of faith is by Jehovah appointed, and Abraham applies it to himself, and to his *household*. Here, then, we have a visible church, built on faith in Christ—the promised seed—set up in the family of Abraham, with an appropriate sign or seal of admission, pronounced by the Apostle “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” This was the state of things four hundred and thirty years before the Levitical laws were established.

Does the fact, that this “seal of the righteousness of faith” was continued under the Levitical economy, destroy its primary and original import ; or allow us to annihilate it with the extinction of other simply ceremonial rites ? This seal (circumcision) had two designs ; the primary and original and all-important one, first, as a “seal of the righteousness of faith ;” and secondly, it served, by a mark in the flesh, to keep the Jewish distinct

from the heathen nations, until the promised seed should come. This latter was its secondary, or inferior and temporary design. When Christ, the promised seed, came, this secondary design of course was then completed; and it was no longer necessary, for that reason, to keep it in practice. But is the great primary intention, namely, as “a seal of the righteousness of faith,” to be also lost sight of?—or, on the supposition that the rite of baptism is also “a seal of the righteousness of faith,” which none will deny, and is come to supersede the harsher one of circumcision, will any undertake to say, that, as the *import* of the two rites are the same, the *application* of them should not be? How, without an express prohibition, can we limit the “seal of the righteousness of faith” in our day to adults, when in Abraham’s day it was applied to the whole household?

The gospel was preached to Abraham. So says Paul. Abraham *believed* it. Here is gospel faith in the head of the household; accordingly he, the head, receives the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith. But he has children and servants. They too, says God, must receive the same seal, though not capable, some of them, of understanding its import. They accordingly *do* receive it; and Abraham thus obligates himself

to train them up in the principles of that faith which he has embraced.

The gospel is preached to the head of a family, in gospel times—say to the jailer, or Lydia. He or she believes it. The seal of the righteousness of faith is accordingly administered. It is not now circumcision, but *baptism*—a milder rite, but of the same import. But what of the household? Shall they not receive the seal? Shall the jailer or Lydia be told that, though they have the same faith as Abraham, and receive the seal, as he did, of the righteousness of faith, yet that they must not walk in his steps in regard to applying the seal to their households? Did the Apostle say to them, ‘Your households cannot have the same privileges which his had, and which Jewish families generally have?’ Must he say to them, ‘The visible church is now restricted to adults, and the children have no connection with it?’ How strange this would have sounded! How unlike that voice which said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God!”

But no such restriction is, by the Apostle, announced. He, the jailer, is baptized, “*and all his, straightway.*” And she, Lydia, is baptized, “*and her household.*” This looks much more like

walking in the steps of faithful Abraham ; and is more like the realization of that “ promise, which is to us, and to our *children*.”

#### ADDITIONAL ARGUMENTS FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

The identity of the church, in all ages, is proved, not only by the faith of Abraham, but of all true Israelites. The gospel no where, according to the Apostles, made essentially a new church. It was a new dispensation. It was the fullness of times. A great enlargement of light and knowledge, and an important change in the external services of the church took place. But there was no new faith ; no faith different in its nature and object from that of the Old Testament saints. This is beautifully illustrated by the parable of the vineyard. The vineyard is the same ; but new laborers are put into it. It is also illustrated by the olive tree and its branches. This tree was planted in patriarchal times. Abraham was an important branch of it ; so were all his spiritual descendants ; and these were never lopped off. But the lineal descendants, in distinction from the spiritual—for all are not Israel that are of Israel—mere nominal Jewish professors, were, for their rejection of Christ, broken off ; and the

true root and stock, still vital and the same, received a new engrafting from the Gentiles.

Now, unless there is an express command that, under the new dispensation, the children of the saints shall not be eligible, by any external rite, to any sort of membership, we must consider our privileges in the Christian church co-extensive at least with those of the Old Testament saints. But there is no such ostracism or excision to be found in the New Testament. On the contrary, we find Christ saying, "Of such," referring to children, "is the kingdom of God."

#### HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM.

We find that when, in obedience to their Lord's command, the Apostles went forth to make disciples, they baptized and admitted to the visible church not only the head of the household, but the household itself. Hence we infer no curtailment of privileges under the New Testament, but the continuation of infant membership as under the Old.

It weighs very little with me, to hear it asserted, against this view, that 'thousands are said to have believed, and to have been added to the church, both men and women, whilst there is no



mention of children.' Here, it is thought, is a triumphant refutation of the idea of household baptism. But let us look at it.

In the forming state of the church, and amid the intense excitement of a pentecostal revival, what other representation would have been natural? When sweeping into the church four or five thousand at a time, it could hardly be expected that reference should be made to the children; as their privilege, in this respect, was a matter of after consideration, and of personal parental responsibility. The multitudes, also, who joined the church by baptism on the day of pentecost, were strangers from a distance. They had left their households, to come up to the appointed feast. It was a great accidental congregation of adults,—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, &c.

But to ascertain the principles and practice of the Apostles, in regard to this matter, it is far more satisfactory and conclusive to take the conversion of the head of a house, presenting a distinct and well-defined case of parental obligation. This we have in the example of the jailer and of Lydia. In these instances, we see how household baptism was viewed by the Apostles. The rite is administered not only to the head, who alone professes the faith, but to all his, and to all hers straightway.

‘*Believe* and be baptized,’ it is said. Of course, Paul would not have administered the rite to a Lydia without a profession of her faith. But does it follow, that Lydia’s household, even without her faith, or only upon her faith, may not receive the sign of baptism as a seal of the righteousness of faith?

The facts in the case are a sufficient answer. But how do we know that the purple vender of Thyatira had any children; or that the jailer of Phillippi had; or that Stephanas had?

In replying to this, we are brought to another form of argument in favor of infant or household baptism.

The Greek term for house is ‘*oikos*,’—a term the meaning of which must be ascertained by its connection or application. When Paul says, he baptized the house (‘*oikon*’) of Stephanas, every person knows that he refers to his family, not his abode. Hence the meaning of the term house, in this connection, is settled. I baptized, says the Apostle, only two adults in Corinth. He was thankful he had baptized no more, since a controversy on that subject was raging among them. I baptized also, he goes on to say, *one household*, viz., that of Stephanas.

In Timothy, it is said, “A bishop must rule

well his own house ;” and to show what the house means, or includes, Paul continues, “ having his *children* in subjection.” Here the house, or ‘*oikos*,’ embraces, as we see, the children. Again ; if any widows have children, let them—that is, the children—learn first to show piety in their *house*. Our translators have rendered it, “ at home.” In 2 Timothy i. 16, “ The Lord give mercy unto the ‘*house*’ of Onesiphorus, for *he* oft refreshed me.” Here Paul does not say, *they* oft refreshed me, but *he* ; and for this, prays that God would give mercy to his “ house,” meaning, evidently, his children. That Paul sends his salutation to the same household does not weaken my position ; no more than it would prove that no children were in a family to whom, from previous acquaintance, you might feel disposed to send your kind regards.

In Hebrews xi. 7 : “ By faith Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” His house meant his family, children included. The Apostle Peter says, that this preparation of the ark for the saving of his house, was a figure of baptism, or that baptism is a figure like unto that ; so that household baptism is strongly intimated by the two passages taken in connection.

We are now, I think, prepared with an answer

to the inquiry, 'How do we know that there were children in the households baptized by the Apostles?' In the references which I have made to the house, (or 'oikos,') the idea of children is almost the only idea embraced in the term; so that when the house of the jailer or of Lydia is spoken of as being admitted to the rite of baptism, the impression is, and can only be, that of *children and dependents*. They were not *old* people, and the inference is, and must be, that their oikos, or house, must have been constituted of comparatively young children.

Take any five or six families in any country, and assert, concerning all of them, that the same blessings or calamities had happened to them; that sickness had smitten these families; that it had smitten 'all his or all hers;' or that some signal good had happened to all his or all hers, in these four or five families; and is there any common sense man, who would doubt, for a moment, that there were children in some of these families, if not all?

We have then household baptism established beyond all question; and the evidence is as strong as any reasonable mind could wish, that there were little children in some, if not in all of these households.

One more argument, founded on the reasoning of the Apostle Paul, (in 1 Cor. vii. 14,) will add weight to what has already been shown in regard to the extent and obligations of Christian baptism. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, (she being a believer;) and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, (he being a believer;) else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

The question is, as to the meaning of this passage. On the conversion of a wife or husband, (being pagans,) the question arose first, Shall they separate? Paul says, No, provided the pagan wife or husband chooses to adhere. Christianity shall not separate them; it shall be even a means of sanctifying the unconverted party. Nor shall it be a barrier to the children's being admitted to Christian privileges, baptism especially; for where one of the parties is a Christian, the children may be considered as rightly entitled to Christian privileges. "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." Every Jew knew what these terms, and this distinction of 'unclean and holy' meant. It did not mean 'legitimate or illegitimate,' as some have said. Nothing of the kind. The *unclean*, was that which could not be offered up to God. The *holy*, or clean, was that which

could be offered to God. The infants of pagans were no more unclean (morally) than others, for all are, by nature, children of wrath ; nor were the children of Christians ‘holy,’ in the sense of moral purity. But the children of pagans were not proper subjects of baptism. Ceremonially, they were as unclean. But where one of the parties—a wife or husband—was brought into covenant, the offspring, for that reason, was ceremonially clean, and entitled to the privilege of baptism.

I am fortified in this opinion by the learned Dr. Doddridge. In his paraphrase on this passage, he says, “For in such a case the unbelieving husband is so sanctified to the wife, and the unbelieving wife is so sanctified to the husband, that their matrimonial converse is as lawful as if they were both of the same faith ; otherwise your children, in these mixed cases, were unclean, and must be looked upon as unfit to be admitted to those peculiar ordinances, by which the seed of God’s people are distinguished ; but now they are confessedly holy, and are as readily admitted to baptism, in all our churches, as if both parents were Christians ; so that the case, you see, is in effect decided by this prevailing practice.”

To this Dr. Doddridge adds, in a note, the fol-

lowing, viz.: "On the maturest and most impartial consideration of this text, I must judge it to refer to *infant baptism*. Nothing can be more apparent than that the word *holy*, signifies persons who might be admitted to partake of the distinguishing rites of God's people; and as for the interpretation which so many of our brethren (the Baptists) have contended for, that *holy* signifies *legitimate*, and unclean *illegitimate*, (not to urge that this seems an unscriptural sense of the word,) nothing can be more evident, that the argument will by no means bear it; for it would be proving a thing by itself (*idem per idem*) to argue, that the converse of the parents was lawful, because the children were not bastards; whereas all who thought the converse of the parents unlawful, must of course think the children were illegitimate."

Without dwelling longer on the subject, or accumulating arguments, as we might, in proof of the prevalence and perpetuity of infant dedication, under all the phases of the church, from Abraham's day to our own, I would, in conclusion, just say, that every Christian parent should understand and perform his duty, in regard to this matter. Being Christ's, he is Abraham's seed, and an heir to all the privileges of the covenant made with

Abraham. 'The promise is to him and to his children.' His privileges and Abraham's are equal and parallel. Under the New Testament dispensation there is no abridgment, no diminution. Is it not the duty, then, of every Christian parent,—and, we may add, one of his most precious privileges,—to place the seal of the covenant upon his offspring, as Abraham did upon his ?



## CHAPTER IX.

### RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

In what sense baptism makes children members of the church—Abraham's family a proper type—relation of children to the church under the Mosaic economy—under the Christian economy—put on the ground of the domestic "ecclesia"—St. Paul's example as to the treatment of households, such as that of Lydia and the jailer—children members of the church general rather than of any church in particular—the responsibility of training and discipline on the parent—the church has a duty—its nature and extent—watch and care, sympathy and instruction, rather than discipline—these views fortified by the late eminent Dr. Dwight—quotations from Dr. Dwight—the baptized child's right to the Lord's supper considered—the discipline of refractory children, to whom it is referred—the church possesses an indirect control through the parent—the duties of the church stated.

It is a natural and very proper inquiry, What is the relation of baptized children to the church of God? In what *sense* does baptism make them members of the church?

If we establish the analogy between Abraham's privileges and those of Christian parents; so that the same covenant engagements, promises, and blessings, apply to both; it follows, that the relation in which Abraham's children stood to the

church, will be a sort of type of a similar relation in regard to baptized children now.

It must be evident that the patriarch's family was a church organization. It was the depository of the true religion. Abraham was the responsible head and high priest of his household. His children, having received "the seal of the righteousness of faith," were the members of this infant church. He instructed them in the faith which terminated on the promised seed ; and taught them to fear and obey God. *He* was responsible to Jehovah for the faithful training of his household ; and the children were amenable to *him* ; being bound to pay due reverence to his authority, and render implicit obedience to his commands. The disciplinary power lay in his hands. This was the order and organization until the bringing in the Mosaic economy.

When the Levitical law was promulgated, at Sinai, express statutes were enacted in regard to children, viz. — that they should be consecrated ; that every male child should have the seal of the Abrahamic covenant put upon him ; and that he should be regarded by this sign, as one of the people of God. As he grew up, he came under obligations to fulfill all the ceremonial law ; and partook of the privileges of the Jewish church.

The question in regard to baptized children, under the Christian economy, is, whether their relation to the church shall be decided by the example of a domestic church, as in the family of Abraham ; or by the style and manner adopted, under the more formal and ritual economy of Moses ?

I prefer putting their relation on the ground of the domestic “ecclesia ;” after the example of Abraham ; especially as it is to his example we refer in establishing the authority of infant consecration and infant baptism. If the same faith is in *us* that was in *him* ; — if the covenant made with him, is made equally with us, having reference, as the Apostle declares, not to the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, but to the gospel as preached to Abraham and believed by him ; — it seems to me, a natural and necessary inference, that our children, when dedicated as his were dedicated ; having a seal of the same import affixed to them, viz., “the seal of the righteousness of faith,” should stand in the same relation to the church of God, as his children stood ; and have exercised towards them the same moral discipline and instruction.

Such seems to have been the idea of the Apostle Paul in regard to the households which he baptized.

Take the jailer's house, for example. There was no church organization at Philippi, when the jailer's conversion and baptism took place. It was probably the seed from which the church, afterwards addressed by Paul, sprung. It began in his family and that of Lydia. It was in the first instance a domestic organization. The jailer may be said to have personated the patriarch; whilst his children, by bearing "the seal of the righteousness of faith," were placed in a relation similar to the children of Abraham, who is 'the father of all them that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles.' He and his *house* belonged, of course, to the church of God. And yet there was no *particular* church, to which they could be said to have belonged. If, afterwards, there was one formed, by the voluntary association of believers — covenanting together for that purpose — it would not nullify the relation in which they already stood to the church of God in general. Suppose there had never been any conversions in Philippi but that of the jailer; and that he and his family — being baptized into Christ — had lived and died disconnected from any particular church organization; will any deny that *he* and *his*, stood related by covenant and promise to the great general

church of God, just as Abraham and his family stood related to it?

We will next suppose that a church organization was formed at Philippi—as we know that, at some subsequent period, there was—and that the jailer became a member of it. Did his baptized children, by that act—supposing that as yet they were of irresponsible age—did they, upon his covenanting with other Christians in a particular church organization, and for mutual edification, become members of that particular church? Not necessarily, we reply. They belonged, by their baptism, to the church general, as the jailer himself did, before covenanting with brethren in a particular church organization. If any of his children were of sufficient age, and, possessing the requisite qualifications, united with him in this new and particular church connection, then they were members both of the church general, and of the church of Philippi in particular. But if still children, and not of requisite age and qualifications for such an act as the one contemplated, they *were not* members of the church at Philippi; but they *were* members of the church of God in general. Had the jailer never had the privilege of joining any particular church, the church in such case would have been, for all prac-

tical purposes, confined to his own household. *He* would have been responsible for the training and moral discipline put forth upon the household members. Nor was this responsibility to be transferred to any particular church with which afterwards he might have united. It still abided upon *him*. The church might aid him in the work; and be of great service by extending their sympathies, and offering him their counsels, and throwing around his household their affections and their prayers. They might even institute, as, according to the early history of the church, they did, catechetical instruction and particular training; but the primary responsibility, after all, lay on the hands of the covenanting parent. The church must act upon the children *mainly* through the parent, teaching him *his* duty towards them, and urging upon him the obligations of the requisite discipline. It was *HE* who covenanted 'to train up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'

The church has often been blamed, and I fear but too justly, for neglecting her duty towards the baptized children. But it is necessary for the church to know what her duty *is*; and this she can only know by finding out what the relation is, subsisting between her and the baptized

children of those who belong to her particular communion. She has duties towards these children, solemn and onerous. To instruct them, to care for their souls, to pray for them, to watch over them, and to sympathize deeply with the parent in all his efforts to bring them up for Christ and his church,—these are her duties ; which I fear are not in general faithfully discharged. But she cannot take from the parent the primary responsibility, which was assumed by the baptismal vows ; nor can she interfere in the way of discipline, since the children have not entered into covenant with that particular church organization. They belong, by their baptism, to the church of God in general. When they choose voluntarily to unite with any particular church, then discipline is in the hands of that church, and may be, and must be exercised.

That these views are neither new nor strange ; that they have Scripture and reason as their foundation, will, I think, be evident to all candid inquirers. I am happy also to bring to their support, so eminent an authority as that of the late President Dwight.

After a convincing train of argument, he says : “ From all these facts, it is evident that a person may be a member of the church of Christ at large,

and not a member of a particular church. A minister is a member of the church of Christ at large, but is never, in the proper sense, a member of a particular church. Peculiarly is this evident when he is dismissed in good standing. An evangelist also ; that is, a minister ordained at large, and having no particular church committed to his care ; is a minister in the church general, and is acknowledged as such by all those who acknowledge the validity of his ordination. He is not, in any sense, the minister of a particular church, nor in any sense a member of such a church.

“When an adult offers himself for baptism, he professes his faith, and enters into covenant with God ; or makes a profession of piety. He then receives baptism, as a seal, on the part of God, of his own covenant with the man, and of his acceptance of him into his family. As this seal is voluntarily received by the man, it becomes also his own seal of his own covenant with God ; a solemn and final acknowledgment of his enrollment in the same family. He is now therefore a member of the church, and may lawfully commune at Christ’s table, wherever his fellow Christians will receive him.

“The eunuch, who was baptized by Philip, was in all respects in this situation. He made a pro-



fession of religion, and was baptized. He was therefore a member of the Christian church ; but he was a member of the church general only, and not of any particular church. He could not have acted as a member of such a church in any ecclesiastical measure ; nor voted in the regulations of worship, communion, or discipline.

“ This I conceive to be exactly the situation of persons baptized in infancy. They are members of the church of Christ ; that is, of the church general. They are members in the same sense in which the eunuch was a member ; in which adults, after their profession and baptism, are members antecedently to their union with particular churches.

“ What then it will be asked, constitutes persons members of particular churches ? The answer is at hand : it is a covenant mutually made by Christians, to worship God together, and in the same manner, and in accordance with the same principles ; and to unite together in the same fellowship and in the same discipline. This covenant and this alone binds them together as a church. None of the persons mentioned above, are, at the time supposed, parties to such a covenant, and therefore none of them are members of a particular church.

“Baptism renders any person capable of membership in a particular church, if he is disposed and otherwise prepared to unite himself to it. But neither this, nor his profession of religion, will constitute him such a member. This can be done in no other way, but by means of that mutual covenant between him and the church, which has been mentioned above.”

It is clear, if these statements and reasonings be admitted, that the baptized child is a member of the church general, anterior to and independent of any connection with a particular church. The particular church may and *should* spread its arms over the child and cherish its spiritual interests in every way possible ; but the primary obligation to instruct and to discipline it lies with the covenanting parent.

#### THE BAPTIZED CHILD'S RIGHT TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Has the baptized child a right, arising from its relation to the church general, to partake of the Lord's Supper ? Undoubtedly it has, if it possesses the spiritual qualifications. It is not, however, considered in accordance with church order and practice, as established among us, for the child

to avail himself of this right and privilege until he shall have formally united with some particular church. Intermediately, his right to the ordinance may be acknowledged ; but for prudential reasons, as where he is yet very young and inexperienced, it may be deemed best for him to remain in a state of abeyance ; until his Christian character shall be more fully developed, and his understanding of Christian duty be clearer and more comprehensive.

It is for each particular church to judge in regard to whom the door of its privileges shall be opened ; and the same judgment she must exercise as to what would be deemed a proper age on the part of those who may seek admission to her communion. Meanwhile the child may be in training, by parental and pastoral instruction, in regard to the nature of Christian ordinances ; particularly that of the Lord's supper ; so that when the time shall come in which it will be prudent and proper for it to enter into covenant with the church, the consecration may be made, with an intelligent view of all the obligations which such a profession implies.

But suppose the child should come to its death-bed before the door shall have been opened for it into a particular church, and, desiring to obey the Saviour's command in regard to the supper, shall

ask for it at the hands of the minister ; shall not the child, in such a case, be allowed to partake ? I see no reason, on the supposition that there is evidence of piety, why he should be refused. Baptism is administered at times to the dying, professing their faith in Jesus ; why, then, under similar circumstances, should the ordinance of the supper be withheld from this young disciple ? It is an extreme case, justifying a departure from rules and practices ordinarily and properly observed, in regard to persons in health ; and so cannot be made a precedent for weakening the obligations of a public and formal confession of Christ.

But again ; a question of kindred but somewhat different nature may be suggested, viz. : Shall the baptized child, who gives no evidence of spiritual qualifications, be allowed to come to the Lord's table ? If, in this case, there be an impediment to this privilege, it lies not in the fact, that he is not a member of the church general—for his baptism makes him such—but in the fact, that he has not the spiritual qualifications to “ discern the Lord's body,” which the child before-named had. The privileges of the one are the same as of the other, provided they are prepared in heart to appreciate and enjoy them. If the unconverted child is

given to understand that he is bound to have the qualifications for partaking of the supper, and that this lack subjects him to the divine displeasure, it is a powerful lever, in the hands of parental faithfulness, which should be used for the spiritual benefit of the child. Whilst refusing to commemorate the Lord's death ; and for the reason assigned, viz., the want of a heart to love and obey him, the child is under a sort of discipline which he should be made to feel, through the prayers, and counsels, and entreaties of his anxious parent. The church also should throw their sympathies in with the parents, and assist, by every lawful and proper means of co-operation, to bring this child to a realization of his sin and to a full surrender of his heart to Christ.

Were the subject viewed in this light, and did the parent, and the church to which that parent belongs, unite in efforts and prayers, earnestly and in faith put forth, with a view to reclaim the young heart to its God ; we can have little doubt, that the God of Abraham would fulfill his part of the covenant, in imparting the needful qualifications !

And here permit me to recur again to the statement of the Rev. Dr. Dwight, touching this point.

“The discipline of all such persons” [referring

to baptized children] “during the years of minority, is committed supremely to their parents and guardians.” “Were the church to interfere directly in the government of persons thus situated, two independent jurisdictions would exist over the same subject, at the same time, and with respect to the same things. These in their exercise could not fail to clash, in many instances. If both jurisdictions are right and scriptural, the child would not know which to obey. But the Scriptures have settled this point, by requiring him to obey his parents in all things, and informing him that this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Hence I infer that the direct jurisdiction of the church over the child, must be merely nominal, and can exist to no valuable purpose.

“The church possesses an indirect control over the child, by the control which it has over the parents ; and this it is bound to exercise in every proper manner.

“The parents are members of a particular church ; and therefore subject to its discipline. Every church is accordingly bound to require such parents as are members of it, to instruct and govern their children, and to walk before them agreeably to the gospel. The church is bound to see that all this is actually done, and to call to a solemn

account all its members, who neglect or violate these duties. This is a control which, if duly exercised, cannot fail of being beneficial to the children. Any other must, I think, be of course injurious.

“The several members of a church are, in my view, bound also to reprove and admonish baptized persons, whom they see in the commission of sin.

“Baptized persons have a peculiar claim on professing Christians for this office of love ; and are bound to receive it with humility and reformation.

“Ministers ought, in my view, to make it a business of their office distinctly to unfold to them the nature of their relation to God and his church ; and solemnly to enforce on them the duties arising from this relation, particularly the duties of repentance and faith in the Redeemer ; of giving themselves up to God in his covenant ; and taking upon themselves openly the character of Christians. The same things should be explicitly and solemnly enjoined, from time to time, upon their parents ; one of whose first duties it is, to coöperate faithfully with their ministers in teaching and enjoining these things upon their children. Were these things begun so soon as their children were capable of

understanding them, and pursued through every period of their non-age, a fair prospect, as it seems to me, would be opened for the vigorous growth, and abundant fruitfulness of this nursery of the church.

“I will further suggest, that it is a part of the duty of the church, at their meetings for evangelical conversation and prayer, to summon the baptized persons, who are minors, to be present at convenient seasons, while the church offers up prayers to God peculiarly for them. Were all these things regularly and faithfully done, (and they all seem to grow out of the circumstances of persons baptized in their infancy,) I cannot help believing that a new face would, in a great measure, be put upon the condition and character of the persons in question. It must be acknowledged that much less attention is paid to them in modern than in ancient times ; at least by churches in general, and less I think by ourselves than by our ancestors.”

#### REFORM NEEDED.

In regard to this whole subject, there needs to be a revival of parental and ecclesiastical obligation. The parent must look deeply into this mat-



ter. The primary responsibility lies upon him. The child is "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." It lives in the moral atmosphere which his spirit and conduct create. Has he offered it to God, as in duty bound? Has he thenceforward regarded it as set apart for God;—and has he, by prayer, and by pious counsels, and by a Christian example, endeavored to carry out the obligations of the covenant?

The church, too, has a duty to that parent; and to the *child*, through that parent. Has she forgotten what Christ said: "Feed my lambs"? Has she left these lambs to wander from the fold, without even a call to return, or an effort to bring them back? Has she seen the prowling wolves devouring them before her eyes, with scarcely an attempt to rescue them; as if her duty consisted only in marking them with the sign of the covenant, and then sending them to the wilderness to be lost, or devoured by wild beasts? No wonder the baptismal covenant is fallen into disrepute. No wonder we are charged with believing one thing, and practicing another. No wonder religion languishes, and household discipline is on the wane. God will never be pleased with us as parents, nor prosper us as churches, until we have a more sacred regard to his covenant. There must be a revival of

household piety. Parents must perform their duty to their children. They must command them in what is right, and teach them what is true ; and restrain them from what is evil, or of evil tendency.

And the churches should expend some of their zeal and employ much of their time in educating the baptized children ; and coöperate with their parents, in this most needful work. There is need of a reform on this point ; and a greater good or better example can scarcely be imagined, than for some church to present us with a model of what is due to God and to the rising generation, in the faithful care and training of the baptized children within the sphere of its influence.

## CHAPTER X.

### PRACTICAL QUESTIONS.

Practical question—how young shall a child be admitted to membership in the church?—the bearings of this question upon the child, and upon the church—inference from the preceding reasoning—very young children sometimes admitted—peculiar cases justifying it—better in general to wait for more age and experience—possibility of deception in regard to a spiritual change—difference in intelligence and moral training—a church to be guided by circumstances—safe rule not to admit too young—from twelve and upwards a reasonable limit.

A NUMBER of practical questions arise, in connection with those obligations which respect the religious training of households. ‘The child of the covenant’ having been consecrated in its infancy, may give signs that it is also by regeneration a child of God. It may have pleased God to have implanted in its tender heart the seeds of a life eternal; and as it grows in stature, it may, like some mentioned in the Scriptures, grow also in favor with God and man. In its very first developments of character, it may give evidence that it has experienced the grace of God. Or, by the prayers and under the training of a pious parentage, it may be brought, in its juvenile existence, to give its

young heart to the Saviour. Even in early childhood, it may experience a genuine conversion.

Under these circumstances, a question for serious consideration is: *How soon shall this child be allowed to enter into covenant with God's people, and so avail itself of the full privileges of the church of God?*

The bearings of this question are twofold. The child's own spiritual improvement is intimately concerned in it; and also what is the duty of any given church to which application may be made in its behalf for membership. What rule should be laid down by a church in regard to such application?

According to reasoning already adopted, and as we think correct in the premises, if the child be a subject of grace in its infancy, it has a right to partake of the ordinance of the supper, as it was previously and properly admitted to the church in general, by the ordinance of baptism. The ordinance of the supper is for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. By the supposition, this child loves the Saviour, and of course should be permitted to commemorate his dying love. It might be expedient however, and very proper, as we have intimated, to postpone the admission of an infant member to full church privileges, until such time

as he or she can take an intelligent view of the nature of the covenant, and also of the obligations which it imposes. This could not be considered an unwarrantable abridgment of privileges, provided the delay was insisted upon, as much for the good of the youthful Christian as for prudential reasons in connection with the purity of the church.

We do not consider the sacrament of the supper as a saving ordinance, any more than we do the ordinance of baptism. It is a sealing and sanctifying ordinance, and important as a means of grace; but its participation is not indispensable to salvation. Still, as we have conceded, there might be an extreme case, as on the death-bed, where a child having a strong desire to enjoy this ordinance, and possessing the qualifications; it might be proper to deviate somewhat from an established custom. It would be expedient therefore, and very proper, to postpone the admission of an infant member to full church privileges, until such time as it can intelligently understand the nature of a profession, and the obligations which it imposes or implies.

If the case is one where uncommon intelligence is combined with ardent piety, of which pious parents are the best judges; it might be expedient also,

and even proper, to introduce a young child into membership. There are, and have been such instances. Very young children have been admitted to the church, and the result, in certain cases, has been highly satisfactory. These cases, however, are not very common. Children may have piety ; but, if very young, they cannot be supposed to enter intelligently into the obligations and duties which are asserted and implied in the covenants usually assented to in our churches. This is one reason for postponing, for a while, a profession in any given church. It argues no want of confidence in youthful piety ; but is a measure of discretion, which any church would be justified in adopting.

A still further reason for some delay, if the child is very young, would be, the possibility of deception in regard to the evidences of true piety. These evidences need to be tested by some experience, in connection with companionship, and worldly pleasures. If the incorruptible seed be there, it will live and grow, especially if the parent's eye be upon it, and his prayers and instructions be employed to nourish it ; and so, in due time, this plant of righteousness may be placed within the sacred inclosure.

Considering the variety of training and of ex-

perience which children have, and the almost endless variety in their temperaments, their precocity, their intelligence ; it would be difficult to lay down any one rule as to the proper age for church membership. Some are more intelligent at eight than others are at twelve or fifteen years. Some are under a training from infancy, with a view to this very duty. It is explained and made familiar to their apprehensions, and if taught at the same time by the Holy Spirit, they may come into the church with as much knowledge of the true nature of a religious profession as older candidates.

I should have no objections, in such cases, to receive a very young person into a church, especially, if to this previous training and present evidence of piety, there were the additional guaranty of a continued effort and example on the part of the parents, to train the child more and more in the practical duties of our religion.

It is a safe rule, however, not to be precipitate in this grave matter. Postponement for a few years will not injure the piety of one who is truly regenerated ; provided the means of grace are enjoyed, and a system of religious culture at home, in the church, and in the Sabbath school be pursued. Yet, after all, must each case stand on its own individual merits ; and each church, in con-

nection with pious and intelligent parents, must decide what is best for the child ; and what policy is most prudent and edifying on the part of themselves. From twelve years and upwards has been thought a prudent limit in regard to admission to the church, even where the evidence of youthful piety is satisfactory.



## CHAPTER XI.

### HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM—A QUESTION IN CONNECTION WITH IT.

A question in connection with household baptism—to what number, and at what age shall baptism be administered, on the faith of the professing head?—case of the jailer at Philippi considered—the example not definite—yet sufficient to warrant the baptism of children under age—custom of the Hebrews in regard to proselytes—remarks of Calmet—the rule should embrace all from twelve or thirteen years and under—no coercion—re-baptism—the question considered—should be discountenanced—and on what grounds—especially its tendency to self-righteousness—objections to the principles and practices of the Baptists, principally on these grounds—spirit of the Apostle Paul in relation to this subject.

WHEN the head of a household is converted and baptized; or converted, having *been* baptized; and there are children of different ages, from infancy up to manhood, in that house, *what rule shall be observed in regard to their baptism?* Such was, in all probability, the case of the jailer at Philippi, and also of Lydia. The conversion respected, in both these instances, the responsible head of the house. Paul was at work in obedience to our Lord's command, 'Go ye and make disciples of all nations; baptizing them,' &c.; and, while thus

laboring, these two heads of households were made disciples. They were accordingly baptized. But we are informed, that "*all his*"—referring to the jailer—were also baptized. Yet of how many his household consisted, or what their ages were, is not made known. Hence we can only draw from this example the presumptive proof in favor of household baptism. We cannot take it as an example of how many in a given household should be baptized; nor within what limitation as to age, the ordinance should be confined. The circumstances would lead us to suppose that in both the instances alluded to, the individuals were in the meridian of life; and so their children were likely to be under age, if not quite young. If they were young children, it is easy to see the force and propriety of the term, "*all his*."

In the absence then of *definite* scripture examples, we are to make our inferences from such as are given, and assume, that where the children are young and dependent, they are to be included in the covenant, and should receive the sign or seal of the righteousness of faith.

It was customary, we know, among the Hebrews, to put the seal upon the household, including even servants; and when converts were made to the Jewish faith, it was required that not only the

head of the house—who may have been the only proselyte—but all his dependent household should wear in their flesh the sign of the new religion. This rule applied to one who entered into full communion with the church, and was called “a proselyte of justice.” But there was no coercion, in cases where the members of the household were of mature age ; the rule had special reference to such as were thirteen years and under. Calmet remarks, “The proselyte also caused circumcision and baptism to be administered to his slaves under thirteen years of age ; those of that age and older, could not be compelled ; but he must sell them if they were obstinate in not embracing Judaism. Female slaves were only baptized if they would become converts.” “Baptism, in respect of girls, had the same effect as circumcision in respect of boys.”

From these circumstances it may be inferred, that when the Apostles went forth to make disciples to the Christian religion of all nations, they adopted a somewhat similar rule. If the head of a house embraced the new faith, he was baptized upon that faith, and also his dependent household, so far as their age justified the parent in their presentation. From twelve or thirteen years and under, the children and servants were baptized,

and the parent or parents became responsible for their Christian training.

The same rule may be observed now. There should be no coercion; but if children even beyond the age of thirteen, and well instructed in the principles of our religion, should wish to be included in the baptismal consecration, I see no reason why the privilege should be denied them. As a general rule, however, I should think it best to let the consecration range from the age of thirteen and under, not excluding any somewhat beyond that age, who should express a strong desire to be included.

#### RE-BAPTISM.

Is it ever proper to re-baptize those who have been baptized in their infancy? Such a question is occasionally presented as a practical one; and it were well in this place, to give it some consideration.

We take the ground that baptism should not be repeated. We will not say that there *never* was a case in which it might not be justified; but the repetition in almost any supposable case would be, as we think, an unwise precedent. If the act shall have been solemnly done in the name of the

Trinity, we see no reason why any supposed defect in the administrator should vitiate or nullify the ordinance. We do not re-baptize those who have received the seal in their infancy or in adult years, from one who proves to be a bad man ; nor are we accustomed to baptize over again, the children of those parents who, from inadequate or superstitious views, had the seal affixed upon their offspring.

The Jews were not accustomed to re-baptize proselytes, even though they had apostatized. Says Calmet, “Baptism was never repeated, neither in the person of the proselyte, though he should afterwards apostatize, nor in that of his children born to him after baptism ; unless they were born from a pagan woman ; in which case they were to be baptized as pagans, because they followed the condition of their mother.”

Some persons are extremely anxious to be re-baptized, on the ground that the person who administered the rite was unsound in the faith—that he was a Romish priest, or a Unitarian clergyman ; and they have a feeling that baptism, by such hands, can be of no avail. We should hardly, perhaps, be justified in treating such scruples lightly, or in refusing, in every case, to re-baptize ; but whenever the idea of re-baptism is presented, under these circumstances, and its necessity

pressed, upon such considerations, it argues a leaning towards Pharisaism which it is very important to rectify. Our Baptist brethren invariably re-baptize, on the ground that they consider pedobaptism as a nullity ; and insist also, that a particular form, that is, submersion, is necessary to the validity of the ordinance. All not baptized in *their way*, are to them *unbaptized*. We have always looked upon this peculiarity as dangerous, because tending to foster a self-righteous spirit ; and, by making an outward rite of so much consequence, they unconsciously, as I think, weaken the *spiritual* power of religion.

For the same reason, I should try to make a convert feel that baptism was not the most important thing ; that whether administered in infancy, or in mature life, it was equally, in God's sight, the introductory sign and seal to membership in the general church ; that even when performed by one whose faith was defective, or whose character should subsequently prove to be vicious, still it was, to all intents and purposes, baptism ; and may be recognized as such, both by the individual baptized, and by the local church with which he proposes to enter into covenant.

Such are the views which, in general, we entertain in regard to re-baptism. They are in the spirit,

we think, of him who, upon finding a schism well nigh ready to break out in the church of Corinth, because one was baptized by Paul and another by Apollos, thanked God that he had baptized so few, and added, “for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### PRACTICAL DUTIES.

Questions as to parental indulgence—amusements—they must be innocent—differing views—a rule in regard to amusements—how to be interpreted—children and parents alike professors under the baptismal covenant—consequent obligations—books—literature of the present day—its tendency in many cases bad—parents must watch on this point—what kind of books to be admitted, and what to be excluded—the Sabbath—its obligation—how to be kept—worship—the duty of parents in regard to where his child shall worship—responsibility of parents—close.

THERE are questions concerning practical duty of every day occurrence, which parents are obliged to meet, and which, as connected with parental obligation and household training, are not always easy of solution.

A parent is often at a loss, how far he shall indulge the wishes of his child in regard to what are usually called the pleasures of life. Amusements of some kind the young and elastic spirit of childhood must have. It would be warring against nature, to restrict the buoyant mind to the mere routine of every-day duties. There must be seasons of relaxation and pleasant pastime, in which



the animal spirits may be developed, and an air of cheerfulness be cultivated. But very often there will be a tendency to excess in these indulgences. An undue proportion of time will be claimed for pleasures which are innocent ; or there will be a craving for such as are, in the judgment of the parent, of injurious tendency.

A *child* is not the proper judge, as to the *amount*, or the *nature* of such indulgences. He is selfish and impulsive. He looks neither at tendencies nor at consequences. He usually decides simply from preferences and the prospect of present gratification. The *parent* then is to be the judge in such cases ; and that judgment is to be exercised according to the disposition of the child, and the known tendency of such pleasures to benefit or to injure those who are addicted to them.

#### AMUSEMENTS.

A first question with the Christian father or mother should be : *Is the amusement which the child craves, innocent ?* It would seem as if it were not difficult to decide this point ; and yet what would be called innoxious by one, would be pronounced hurtful by another ; and what one parent would

consider morally injurious, another would plead for, as an innocent pastime. I have known parents who were professors of piety, and possessors too, it is hoped, who were in favor of dancing as a juvenile accomplishment, and altogether innocent, if not carried to excess ; and I have found others in the same church, who looked upon this exercise as belonging only to the ungodly, and who were pained to learn that any of their fellow-Christians either practiced it, or encouraged their children in the practice of it.

I have known professors who justified themselves in taking their children to all sorts of shows and exhibitions, indiscriminately, not excepting even the opera and the theatre.

It will be seen, therefore, that the rule which I have laid down, viz., that the amusements of our children should at least be innocent, is one which is liable to be variously construed, and so may lose all its practical force.

But as I am now addressing those parents especially who have entered into covenant with God, and have made a sort of double profession, having vowed not only for themselves, but for their children, to set the latter a Christian example, and in every possible way to train them up for God and heaven ; I am clear in laying down an expository

understanding of the rule suggested. And my understanding is this : that as the children are members of the church general, by baptism, they should be indulged in no amusements which would not be allowable to a professor of religion. Of course I do not now refer to the ordinary out-door sports of childhood, in which children usually and innocently engage. I refer more particularly to those artificial and exciting shows and entertainments which are addressed more to the sensual than to the moral or intellectual part of our nature. Under this head, I place all theatres and modifications of theatrical exhibitions ; where characters of exceptionable morality, by scenery, dress, and song, cater to the depraved taste of mankind. Here is no place for a Christian parent or a Christian child. No person is educated either for *this* world or for *heaven*, in such schools as these. No matter how much the child may plead for such amusements on the score of popular attraction and general example ; the parent should take his stand and say, ‘*No*. I am bound to do every thing in my power to train up my children for usefulness here, and for glory hereafter ; and such amusements stand directly opposed to this high and holy intention. If it would be inconsistent for me, a professor of religion, to be seen at such places, why is it not equally

inconsistent for me to allow my children, who are also in a sense professors of religion, by their baptism, to resort to them ?'

Let no parent say, he is forced into compliance ; that he cannot help it. He *can* help it ; and he is bound to forbid it, if the indulgence is inconsistent with his vows, or of injurious tendency to his child. So long as a child is a minor, dependent upon him, and under his care, that child is bound by the law of the household, to obey the parent ; and ordinarily will be found to acquiesce ; provided that parent does his duty in the way of exacting obedience. Children have a conscience. They know many times, that the things for which they plead are wrong, or of injurious tendency ; and yet from mere selfish or sensual impulses they will plead with their parents to indulge them only this once, or in this one thing. But there is something within that tells them, even before the parent has given his decision, that the thing is of questionable morality. Let the parent assume this, and set before the child in an affectionate way, the evil tendencies of the amusement in question ; keeping in view, meanwhile, that the baptismal covenant obliges him to do only that which will make for the spiritual good of his child ;—let him thus do, and the conscience of the child will re-

spond to his decision, however the selfish or sin-loving heart may object to it.

If the parent, who has entered into covenant for himself and for his child, may not lawfully or consistently be found in gay circles, where the whole tone and spirit of the company is of a merely sensual cast,—where late hours are kept and promiscuous dancing is indulged,—if *he* may not consistently form a part of such circles, I see not why he should send his child, one of the lambs of the flock, into them. For that child he has made solemn vows, obliging himself by a sort of sacred oath to do every thing in his power to further its spiritual interests and to save its soul. These vows bind him to refuse invitations not only for himself, but for his children, where it is well-known that a moral peril is involved in the acceptance.

But I hear the ambitious father or mother say, would you have us make our children nuns or recluses? Shall we cut them off from society? No, by no means. My advice goes not to that length. It simply says to you, Send not your children to places where their spiritual interests will be endangered. This is all. I remember one man—and in the judgment of charity a Christian—who stood over the dying couch of his daughter, now

unconscious and just at the point of death, and, wringing his hands, he exclaimed, "Oh, I have educated my daughter for this world."

#### BOOKS.

In the present day, we are flooded with books. The press is at work day and night, pouring forth a perpetual stream upon the counters and bookshelves of the publishers, with taking titles and attractive embellishments. Columns of the daily papers are filled with advertisements of these books, in a style the most exaggerated ; telling how many thousands have been published, and quoting editorial commendations, and all with a view to money-making. These books, in a majority of cases, are got up especially to sell. The authors have in view the profits, and so have the publishers. The question is, What will sell ? This question looks directly to the public taste. If it is low and corrupt, the books will be of a similar character. Books which are made to sell, are very likely to have a stamp and character, which make them attractive to the million. But the million are not the best judges of a healthful literature ; and consequently the press groans under the weight

of noxious, and, in some instances, detestable books.

Here then is work for the parent. He is to judge what books are best to come into his domestic sanctuary. He must keep an eye on this matter, or, ere he is aware, the door that is left carelessly open, will admit some serpent, in the form of an embellished volume, which will steal noiselessly in, and sting the soul of his child. Books that excite the passions ; that consume time, without imparting any valuable information ; that appeal to a morbid curiosity, or make an insidious attack on the principles of morality and of piety ; all such books the Christian parent will feel it to be his duty to exclude from his household. Happily there are so many good books as well as bad ones in the market, books which are entertaining yet instructive, that inculcate good principles by apt and beautiful illustrations, which tend to improve the heart whilst they interest the mind, that the parent has no apology for allowing his child to drink at the turbid and even poisonous fountains of the popular literature of the day.

#### THE SABBATH.

Another practical question relates to the observance of the Sabbath. How shall this day be kept

in a Christian family, so that the example shall be good upon others, and the effect salutary upon themselves? “*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*” This, as a part of the decalogue, is of perpetual obligation. Every Christian parent admits this, and is only anxious to know in what the sanctification of the Sabbath consists?

Whilst we concede that the Christian Sabbath is not to be observed in the same manner precisely as the Jewish Sabbath was, yet the tendency is to too great laxity; rather than to an unnecessary and burdensome strictness. Hence we should be the more vigilant in guarding the day from desecration than anxious to release its claims or to loosen its hold upon the conscience. The world is edging on more and more, and pushing itself into positions which are a virtual robbery of God in regard to the time which he claims to his service. “Will a man rob God? But ye have robbed me!” What loose examples everywhere are seen, in regard to the keeping of the Sabbath. Some spend it in indolence, in eating and drinking, in riding and recreating, in writing letters or posting accounts, in visiting or in receiving visits, in traveling for business or for pleasure. Such are the ways in which the day, even by some who call themselves respectable, is occasionally or habitually



desecrated. Throngs of people will post off to a concert on Sabbath evening, where any good impressions which may have been made upon their minds by the services of the sanctuary, are all obliterated under the noisy excitement. What a terrible retribution will come upon us if things go on thus ; and the Sabbath is converted more and more into a day of idleness or of pleasure !

The duty of all Christians is to stand by the Sabbath, to uphold its claims ; and in their *households*, to insist upon its entire consecration. All secular business must cease. The least preparation possible must be made for the provision of the flesh. It must be a day consecrated to the good of the soul. A new and a live coal must be laid on the family altar. It must be a day not of gloom, but of holy cheerfulness. “This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

“ Oh day ; most calm, most bright :

The fruit of *this*—the next world’s bud ;

The endorsement of supreme delight ;

Writ by a friend, and with his blood ;

The couch of time—care’s balm and bay ;

The week were dark, but for thy light,

Thy torch doth show the way.”

“Thou art a day of mirth ;  
And where the week days trail on ground,  
Thy flight is higher as thy birth :  
Oh let me take thee, at a bound !  
Leaping with thee from seven to seven ;  
Till, that we both, being tossed from earth  
Fly hand in hand to heaven.”

Most of the Sabbath should be spent in acts of devotion. The closet should be regarded as having a first claim ; and the parent should see that his child neglects not this duty, but occupies a portion of the Sabbath morning in reading the Scriptures and in prayer. All should be punctual in their attendance upon the family worship ; and the parent should aim to make it both attractive and edifying, without being tedious.

Then comes the public worship of the sanctuary ; where the children should be found, seated with their parents, and listening to the message of salvation. It is the duty of Christian parents to insist upon a uniform and serious attendance by their children upon the services of God's house. They should worship at the same altar, and side by side with their parents. A prurient curiosity will sometimes lead the child to wish to go elsewhere ; and many parents, upon such a wish being expressed, will yield to it, provided the pledge is given that they will go somewhere to church. But the parent

opens a fatal crevasse by such indulgence. Ere long the child's soul is in peril. He has wandered away among associations, which are any thing but friendly to his spiritual interests. Having gained one concession, he will very likely ask for more ; and it would require no prophetic skill to see the fatal and downward tendency of such ill-judged indulgence. We would not be harsh nor unnecessarily stringent, if a respectful request be made occasionally to attend some other place of worship than our own. But it should be *only* occasional, and for good reasons ; for reasons which the parent deems good and sufficient.

How beautiful a sight to see a parent, surrounded by his children, going up every Sabbath together to the house of God ; sitting together in these heavenly places ; fed by the same bread of life, and hopefully training, under the same means of grace, for the same holy heaven !

Let me not be thought bigoted in advising, and even insisting that Christian parents restrain their children from wandering to this and that place of worship, as their fancy or curiosity may lead. This is not the way to 'train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' It is not doing their duty toward them. It is a violation of those vows which, by the baptismal covenant, bind them to

seek the spiritual good and ultimate salvation of their children. No ; Christian parent, take your child by the hand, and say, ‘*My* duty to attend upon this ministry is *yours*. You are, whilst a minor and under my authority, to worship with me. I have bound myself to train you up in God’s ways ; to place you where you will be most likely to find the gate of heaven ; and as I judge in regard to myself, that this sanctuary is the best place for me to learn the way to heaven, so I must judge it is the best place for you. I wish to retain you near my side, to have our sympathies blended in this great matter.’

Such an address cannot fail to affect the child ; and there can be little doubt, where the parent is firm but affectionate in his refusal to set the child adrift on the current of his curiosity or caprice ; but holds him warmly to his own religious associations, that the child will acquiesce, and will in truth find, that his own sanctuary is to him “the gate of heaven.”

How responsible the relation of parents and children ! How soon will both be called to give up their account to God ! What parent can contemplate that account without feeling that, paramount to all the claims which the child has upon him, for temporal support, and intellectual train-

ing, and social advancement, is the claim, *to educate his soul for a glorious immortality!* Lose sight of this, and no matter what other things are done which might lift him into some conspicuous earthly station, or endow him with some short-lived pleasures, which wealth may procure; he will still lack ‘the one thing that is needful’; and though he has had the seal of the covenant upon his infancy, he will have forfeited, and perhaps through parental neglect, his heavenly birth-right; and, like Esau, ‘find no place of repentance though he seek it carefully and with tears.’















